

Florin Japanese-American Citizens League  
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

**FRANK IRITANI**

July 18, 22, 25, and 31, 1996  
Sacramento, California

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and  
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# JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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## PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast, devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Many Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin, or have relatives and friends who once had ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the spirit of the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Several hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in the relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind. They were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their 70's, 80's and 90's. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jackie Reinier, former Director of the Oral History Program at California State University in Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also wish to acknowledge the project members, volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation, and the Taisho Young Mens Association which contributed some of their assets as they dissolved their corporation on December 31, 1991.



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## **INTERVIEW HISTORY**

### **Interviewer/Transcriber**

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Associate Professor, California State University, Sacramento

### **Interview Time and Place**

Session 1, July 18, 1996  
Session 2, July 22, 1996  
Session 3, July 25, 1996  
Session 4, July 31, 1996

Home of Frank and Joanne Iritani  
890 Sunwind Way  
Sacramento, California

### **Editing and Revision**

Tapes 1 and 2 were transcribed by Heidi Sakazaki. Tapes 3 and 4 were transcribed by Janie Matsumoto Low and formatted by Heidi. The entire manuscript was reviewed by Frank Iritani and Janie Matsumoto Low. Minor editing changes were made by the interviewee.

Biographical summary was written by the interviewee.

### **Tapes and Interview Records**

Copies of the bound transcript and the tapes will be kept by the Florin Japanese American Citizens League and in the University Archives at the Library, California State University, Sacramento, 6000 J Street, Sacramento, California 95819.



## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

### A NISEI JOURNEY

Frank Iritani was born on January 25, 1921 at home in Sullivan, Arapahoe County, Colorado to Saichi and Chitose Iritani.

### PARENTS

As with most Americans, Frank is a child of immigrants. His parents came from Okayama, Japan seeking a better life. After a short time working at railroad construction, his father married, settled around Denver, and engaged in vegetable farming for the rest of his life. Because of continuous discrimination and various anti-Asian laws from "the first day in America," and needing to labor long hours in the fields to survive and get five children educated, his parents never got around to community involvement. As with all Asian immigrants, his parents had been denied the right of naturalization for citizenship by the United States Government until the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952.

### TWO IRITANI FAMILIES

There were two brothers that came to America: Saichi and Heikuro Iritani. Saichi, Frank's father, farmed in Sullivan (on eastern outskirts of Denver) and Heikuro raised vegetables around Littleton (just south of Denver). All five Saichi children were



born in Sullivan and attended Ash Grove Elementary School and Englewood High School. The Heikuro girls (Beey and Mary) were born and grew up in Littleton. The four Saichi boys went to college. Frank, Roy and Dan served in US Army. Roy is a Purple Heart 100/442 veteran.

### EDUCATION

Frank's education was somewhat broad: two years in Tokyo as a young teenager, two years in the military as MIS soldier in the Philippines and Tokyo following WW II, a couple of pre-military service years at Colorado School of Mines, a couple of post military service years at University of Minnesota for the BA degree, and three years in Pacific School of Religion for the Bachelor of Divinity degree.

### MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage to Joanne Ono (Bakersfield, CA) in 1956, resulted in three children: Susanna born in Oxnard, CA; Kenneth born in Portland, OR; and Bonita born in Bakersfield, CA. Susanna has a Masters Degree in Speech Pathology from Cal State, Northridge and is married to Rick Minard in Washington, DC, with a child due in December, 1996. Ken graduated from UC Davis, is married to Lesley Lumsden, and has three small boys, Daniel, Kevin and Jacob, in Sacramento. Bonita earned a Masters in Psychology at Stanford, is married to Jon Hussey and has one little girl, Marisa. Joanne



(UC Berkeley, Cal State, Bakersfield, MA) is a retired school teacher, President of Florin JACL, active in Centennial UM Church and volunteers in several community programs.

#### VOCATION

Finding a suitable vocation has been a "journey of sorts." As with many Nisei, who had worked in fruit stands and gardening after graduating from Stanford and Berkeley, Frank did dishwashing and delivery work in San Francisco, after graduating from the University of Minnesota. He then began his studies at the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, and a ten-year career in the Japanese Christian ministry. This was followed by over twenty years as a Social Service Worker for San Joaquin and Kern County Welfare Departments before his retirement at age 65. He considers all of it as an interesting and satisfying "journey" with "ups and downs" in going through the unique experience as a "Nisei." He is very grateful to his family, relatives, co-workers and friends who helped in anyway with this life journey so far.

#### TRAVELS

While working and during their early retirement years, Frank and Joanne did some traveling around the U. S. and Asia taking in the various places visited-- not only through the eyes, but through the mind as well. From their home in Bakersfield, they traveled several times to Denver to visit Frank's relatives. When the children were of



high school age, the whole family including Grandma Ono traveled across country to Boston to visit Joanne's nephew attending Tufts Medical School.

Around 1989 and thereafter, the couple visited all the camps which resulted in their book *TEN VISITS: Brief Accounts of our visits to all ten Japanese American Relocation Centers of WW II*, with sketch maps, color photos, Relocation Recollections, the Struggle for Redress, Human Relations and other essays. Joanne and her family were interned in Poston Camp I, but Frank was never in a camp since Nikkei in the Rocky Mountain states were not forced to relocate, but the discrimination was just as bad. Membership in the East-West Association, Honolulu, resulted in attending conferences and visiting China and Thailand. Of course, several visits were made to Frank's relatives in Okayama and to Fukushima for visits to Joanne's relatives. Vancouver, Edmonton and other Canadian cities were visited in connection with a Pan-Nikkei conference.

## ORGANIZATIONS

The United Methodist Church and Japanese American Citizens League have been the main organizations the Iritanis are involved in. Frank is beginning to feel these groups are too tradition bound and stuck with past achievements and not adjusting and keeping up with the changing times as witness their decreasing memberships in recent years. With increasing Asian American demographics in the larger community, there are increasing human relations problems such as human and civil rights issues, too many



guns, gangs, family violence and decline of public education. Their vision and concern is with the children and the mixed marriage grandchildren and their future well being.

## POLITICS

Frank says we must heed Congressman Robert Matsui's constant call for fuller citizenship and get more involved--to vote, participate more in the political process, and run for elective office. Otherwise, though we may have the numbers, we will not have a commensurate voice in law making and policy decisions at corporate and all levels of government. Frank has been a registered voter and Democratic party member all his life. Currently, he is pushing the local National Asian American Pacific Voter Registration Campaign by setting up voter registration booths at church bazaars, community picnics and on college campuses. We can no longer afford "to just work hard, get the children through school and stay within our ethnic groups." The need is urgent to lift up and focus on the "C" in Japanese American Citizens League.

## RELIGION

Custom or tradition has it that "religion and politics be kept separate." This sidesteps the "whole view" of integrated living, hinders getting along with neighbors and are a part of the problem with what ails our society. The decreasing role and influence of religion, church, schools and both parents or single parents working makes good,



effective family functioning difficult. Frank's mother was a strong religious follower of a Japanese Asian Konko sect and would like his Christianity to be friendly with her religion and other religions in our community.

## RETIREMENT

Fortunately, being of good health, the Iritanis are enjoying their senior years. They especially enjoy the four grandchildren and try to spend time with them, the children and their spouses. Retirement also includes volunteering at church, community, and JACL activities, and doing some free lance writing.

An Iritani Family Reunion was held this spring (1966) in Las Vegas. All five Iritani siblings and the two (widowed) cousins from Colorado, Beey and Mary, came together for the first such reunion (other than funerals). Frank hopes to put together a small family history booklet soon.

## THE NISEI ROLE

Being "Nisei" is an unique experience--journey. The term "Nisei" is found in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and defined as: "a child of Japanese Immigrants, born and educated in North America." John Naisbitt in his book *MEGATRENDS ASIA* writes that world dominance is shifting from West to East (to Asia). The pivotal players, he says, will be Asians living in America and Asian Americans--bringing together the best



of the East and the best of the West into a new world configuration. In this global community, Asian Americans and Asians educated and working in America will be the bridge between the East and West.

However, Frank and other Nisei now in their 70's and 80's are disappearing as a group. Their children, the Sansei (also in Webster's Dictionary) and subsequent generations will need to carry on and assume the "bridge" role.



SESSION 1, July 18, 1996

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

MATSUMOTO LOW: I am JANIE MATSUMOTO LOW and I am sitting here with FRANK IRITANI in his home. Actually, it's his home and his wife, JOANNE IRITANI's home at 890 Sunwind Way in Sacramento, California. Today is July 18, 1996. MARION KANEMOTO has been after me to interview FRANK because he tries to be helpful in Japanese-American activities in our community here in Sacramento, so I am really pleased to be able to be here and be the one who interviews FRANK. I would like to start out by talking about your early years and hearing about your background, and so I'm just going to let you begin to share what you remember about your family, maybe starting with your family back in Japan--your grandparents and great grandparents even, and then we will move into other members of your family.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Would you like to start talking about your background--what you know about your family in Japan?

IRITANI: Yes, I visited the grandparents back in 1938 and '39 when I went back with a group called the kengakudan. It was a special study group of young Niseis from United States to Japan. There was a group about fifteen of us, including my cousin MARY. I remember leaving on a train in Denver, and the first time I left my family crying [LAUGHTER] as we left the station in Denver. That's the first time I left the family, but, anyway, we made it from Denver to Ogden and to San Francisco. There we caught the boat to Yokohama. We stayed in the dormitory in a place called Senko Maecho, Nakano Ku in Tokyo. We had classes during the morning--classes like Japanese history and Japanese geography and also writing called shu-ji. And then in the afternoon we had the sports--judo and kendo. Evenings we went out visiting--sight-seeing. During the summer we did some traveling around Japan--the Japanese shrines, different oteras around Tokyo, through Southern Japan and even into Kyushu. Then in the summer I was able to visit my grandparents, the SHIMIZU family. They



IRITANI: were pretty old, as I recall, at that time. Of course, I met my aunt and uncle there. Well, I skipped. . . . [LAUGHTER] I have a lot to say but I think we got to move on here. Let's see, I was in Tokyo in 1938 and '39 for two years. I think my cousin MARY--she came back after one year. I'm not sure but, anyway, it was an interesting experience. I remember the beautiful cherry blossoms in Tokyo during the spring and everywhere we went, it was efficient public transportation they have in Japan--street cars, and busses, and trains.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Can you tell me what you remember about meeting your grandparents and what your impressions were of them?

IRITANI: Yes, that was a quite a few years back, but, of course, I tried to speak in Japanese because they didn't know any English at all, and they just had the two children and a little girl by the name of MICHIE. She's quite an elderly person right now. And then my uncle--I remember he was of military age and he went to China during the war when Japan invaded China and other parts. Also, I visited my father's home town. It was a few miles away from the town of Shimizu where my mother's home town was, and I remember staying a few days at each of those



IRITANI: places. Well, you know, it takes a little while to try to think of something.

MATSUMOTO LOW: It's all right. You said that you had an aunt and an uncle. Do you know what's become of them and their children and family?

IRITANI: Let's see here, yes, my uncle passed away--I'm not too sure if he passed away while he was in the war, but I know he went away as a soldier.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was that in World War II?

IRITANI: Yes, during the war between China and Japan. Well, Japan was the aggressor at that time and they invaded China and took, I think later, Manchuria.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Manchuria.

IRITANI: Well, my aunt, let's see, a few years ago my wife and I visited Okayama, and my aunt was living in the home of her daughter because she didn't want to stay in a nursing home, so she stayed home and was taken care of by the daughter MICHIE, and she passed away a year or two ago.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Where was this? In the United States?

IRITANI: No, Okayama.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Okayama.

IRITANI: Okayama, Japan, a town called Shimizu. Shimizu is just about an hour's train ride out of Okayama City. So it's a little out of the City of Okayama.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you have cousins there in Okayama?

IRITANI: Yes, I have one cousin. Her name is MICHIE and I think she's a few years younger than I am, but she's getting along in years. Every time we visited Japan, they really treated us royally, and I have encouraged her to come to the United States, but not only myself but my two other brothers who have visited them, and we'd like my cousin to come to the United States and visit once, but she claims she has health problems, so both [she] and her husband are retired, so I don't know. Once in a while I'll call her by long distance telephone. I usually call about two o'clock in the morning here which is about 8 o'clock in the evening over there, and I send them a Christmas present, New Year's card, and things like that.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So she's in ill health but maybe also it's difficult to think of coming to the United States after all those years having lived in Japan.



IRITANI: They hardly speak any English. Well, she has children, I think, [who] understand English a little bit more, but, anyway, we keep in touch and communicate by cards, especially during holidays and New Years.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, that's wonderful that you can do that. You mentioned that you had stayed two years in Tokyo. At that time did you continue your training? It sounds like you were going through some kind of academic preparation because you mentioned that you were going into shu-ji writing and into academics . . .

IRITANI: Well, the reason for the shugakudan was just to give the Nisei some schooling and training in Japanese culture. I think at that time, relations between United States and Japan were not too good in '38 and '39, and it was before Pearl Harbor, and I remember my father talking about the way United States and other countries of the world treated Japan unfairly, and also he didn't think Niseis had much of a future in the United States, and so he sent me and, of course, the other was Niseis went to Japan to get some education, and some of those fellows went through this kengakudan deal and a few also went to Japanese chugakko and to such Universities as Meiji and, well, mostly



IRITANI: Meiji Daigaku in Japan. It was pretty hard to get into Teikoku Daigaku --that's the Imperial University. Some of them, they stayed there, but most of them went there for a couple of years and then came back to U. S., and so that was the idea-- to give us some idea of Japanese language and culture and so forth. Sometimes I wonder if it did much good because after I came back I hardly used the Japanese [language] except in communicating with the parents. I used to be able to read Japanese papers and listen to Japanese newscasts, but I don't think I can do it now days.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You still have a tremendous advantage over people that were born here when you came here. They never had a chance to study in Japan.

IRITANI: Yeah. Well, I can recognize Japanese names and especially in books and writings, and people when they are talking I can tell whether they know Japanese or not because usually the non-Japanese will emphasize certain syllables. In Japan it's sort of a monotone. Like my name, I guess, when you Anglicize it, it's I-ri-ta'-ni. Some say it sounds Italian. But in Japan it's I-ri'-ta-ni--I-ri'-ta-ni. Maybe you recognize it too. Or, let's see,



IRITANI: another example--oh, GEORGE TAKEI--it's "Ta-ke'-i," but a lot of other people--non-Japanese--will call it "Takai." That's not correct.

MATSUMOTO LOW: No. That sounds like the word for expensive, "takai."  
[LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: "Takai." Whenever GEORGE talks about his name, he says, "Oh, no, I'm not expensive!" [LAUGHTER]

MATSUMOTO LOW: He makes a joke about it.

IRITANI: Yes. He's an excellent speaker. A great person. I met him a couple of times.

MATSUMOTO LOW: He was also formally educated in Japan? Do you know?

IRITANI: Well, no, he was just real young when he was in [Relocation] camp, and he had good relations with his father, and his family life was good, which was so not unusual but, anyway, it was to his advantage and they encouraged him to go to college, and he wanted to be an actor and the parents thought, you know, he should be a doctor or something like that. But, anyway, after a false start in Berkeley in architecture, he transferred to UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] and took up acting, and this was with the blessing of his father,



IRITANI: and when he graduated from UCLA, he got a vacation to London to study Shakespeare, so that's where he picked up his good language. Anyway, we're getting off the subject.

MATSUMOTO LOW: We're getting off the mark. We want to talk about FRANK IRITANI, not GEORGE TAKEI. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: Yeah, I can talk more about . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Other people. You know, during the time that you studied in Japan, it seems that economically those were difficult times for everybody, especially for Japanese-Americans. I'm wondering if it was a financial hardship for your parents to be able to send you to Japan at that time.

IRITANI: Yes. During '34, '35, '36 there was a great depression here, especially out in the Rocky Mountain States where the depression was due to low prices and drought and grasshopper plagues and, you know, I think my folks did sacrifice. There were five in our family but somehow we managed. We just grew our food to eat and, well, some say that just before the war it wasn't too bad. I think the great depression of '35, '36 was getting over around '39 or so and, in fact, the United



IRITANI: States was making war preparations, you know, [in] 1939 and '40.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What were your parents [SAICHI and CHITOSE IRITANI] doing in the '30s and before that as far as economy and income?

IRITANI: Well, like most of the Isseis, I think my father came in to the United States through Seattle. I'm not too sure but for a while he worked on the railroad, and he was a cook, I think, because whenever. . . . Every once in a while he criticized my mother's cooking and she didn't like it so, anyway, then he. . . . This is. . . . [He] worked on the railroad around Wyoming, I guess, and places like that. I do have a diary that he kept and it indicates how much he made that day, what he spent on certain things, and all that, but anyway . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: That would be a wonderful source for a book.

IRITANI: Yes. He settled around Denver and all five of us were born right there in the little town of Sullivan which is just outside of Denver and, of course, at the beginning my Dad ran it and after a while I think he bought the larger farm in the name of



IRITANI: "Frank." The thing is his name is "Frank" and my name is "Frank," so there were Alien Land Laws. I don't know how strong they were in Colorado but I know they were enforced here in California. Anyway, he was to buy a small 20-acre piece of land there [in Sullivan] and we grew vegetables, all kinds of vegetables, and later during the war--after the war the family moved to a larger place up towards Thornton, Colorado, which is near the airport, and that's where my sister lives now and they still have the property there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Are they still farming?

IRITANI: No, they are retired and we're trying to sell the farm and it's rented out to some people that's raising vegetables --hay and that sort of stuff. Hard time selling it. It's in the Platte River bottom and quite a few families along there are trying to sell but the City of Thornton wants to get--pay a cheap price and, of course, [chuckles] we are holding out for a higher price. Some of the farmers just sold the water rights. So while we're waiting for maybe a drought, then we can sell all the water rights. [chuckles]



MATSUMOTO LOW: When you were growing up, do you remember working on the farm with your siblings and your parents?

IRITANI: Yup, it was hard work and we used to use horses to cultivate and plow, and later on we got tractors and other equipment like that but, yeah, I remember raising sugar beets and loading the sugar beets on to the truck using a fork. That was hard work but after a while we got a mechanical sugar beet digger which dug out the beet and loaded it on to the truck. My brothers were able to accomplish that, but, yeah, farm work was real hard. My mother worked out in the fields, and it was long hours and hard work, and so when September and school time came around we were pretty happy--didn't have to work out on the fields and, also, every time school started we get some new clothes. Oh, excuse me. I'll have to stop . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: We'll stop it here; the phone is ringing. [Interruption]

IRITANI: Can I go back to the education or going to school?

MATSUMOTO LOW: Sure, we can go back because there are some other things I want to make sure that I touched on--just finding out where your parents met, circumstances of their courtship, marriage. Was it an arranged marriage?



IRITANI: Yeah. Let's see, we were. . . . I think before the interruption, we were talking about going to school.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Right.

IRITANI: Well, this is one thing that I appreciated about my parents that they encouraged us to go to school in spite of the fact that we were pretty poor and they needed all the help, you know, on the farm because I know some Japanese-American families where the oldest son would quit school. In fact, my cousin's husband by the name of HARRY IDA--he had to drop out of high school for a year or two to help on the farm. Then he'd go back to school for a year or two and so I don't know if he ever graduated from high school, but that was what was going on. And, also, through my experience as a social worker in Kern County, I worked with a lot of Mexican and Hispanic families. And there, the family is pretty strong, so if there was some problem or some of the family member was sick, the kids would stay home and, consequently, their education was secondary. Where it seems to me among my family and Japanese-Americans, education was primary, so my brothers were all able to go through college, and the parents, you know,



IRITANI: sacrificed, I'm sure, so that we could do that, and the only one that didn't get to college was my sister because she married early.

MATSUMOTO LOW: How did your parents--your father manage the farm though without your help during the peak seasons? Because I know that my Dad reported his parents encouraged him to go to school but at the same time they expected him to get up very early in the morning and help on the farm first.

IRITANI: Yes, I remember helping with hot beds and stuff like that before going to school and then after school, having to work. Consequently, we couldn't take part doing any extra-curricular activities like sports, because as soon as classes let out, I remember my brothers and I getting into the car and going out to the farm to do farm work. And so that was probably the way it was for many of the Nisei kids. Well, you say you want to go back to my parents--how they met and all that? Well, I'm not too sure. Maybe my sister would know.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you know if it was an arranged marriage?

IRITANI: No, I don't know. Gosh, [chuckles] I haven't concerned myself with that part.



MATSUMOTO LOW: All right. Maybe we can catch that another time. You mentioned there was something that you wanted to talk about that was important. I'm not sure. Was that relative to your growing up in Colorado?

IRITANI: Well, we mentioned about the emphasis the parents [made] to encourage us to go to school and get an education, and there were many times where I had received a certificate in perfect attendance in spite of the fact that, especially in the winter, transportation was difficult. I remember one time my Dad, after a snow, drove us to school in a horse and wagon.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That he made sure you got to school.

IRITANI: Yeah, otherwise, we'd walk. During the summer in the seventh and eighth grades I remember riding the bicycle.

MATSUMOTO LOW: When you first started school, kindergarten or the earliest years, did you speak English or was your . . .

IRITANI: No, I don't think so. I don't remember too much. We were the only Japanese family in the school there and I don't remember. About the only thing I remember was I know in each room there were two classes--the seventh and eighth in one room and that way, and after eighth grade we went on to junior high and



IRITANI: high school at another place but, yeah, during grade school days I remember playing some baseball and going to speech contests, and I was interested in baseball. So the caretaker of the school, he lived nearby, and during recess I'd sneak over there to hear the World Series' scores. I remember that.

[chuckles]

MATSUMOTO LOW: As the only Japanese in the school, what were your feelings about your treatment by the other children?

IRITANI: Well, there were times when I felt that I was not of the group and that I was a little bit different. And one thing I was conscious of was that my mother worked out in the fields and whereas the other mothers, I never did see them out in the fields. And they had PTAs so I remember going to the PTA meetings and taking cookies or refreshments, but [my] parents never did go. They were so busy on the farm. I don't recall them ever attending graduation or activity at school. Of course, they understood very little English, so. . . . Well, they were friendly with the neighbors and the neighbors were friendly with us but they just didn't participate in school. There was hardly any community there either, as I recall. The



IRITANI:

only time we had any social contacts were with my aunt and uncle and cousins. They were out in Littleton which was in South Denver. We were out in East Denver and we'd go out there. After some of those drought years I remember my Dad farming some of my uncle's land, and I remember going out there and cultivating with a tractor and picking beans and harvesting and tying asparagus at night time with my cousins and so, you know, that was about it. But the only social life, I guess, we had--because the parents are Buddhist and they belonged to the Denver Buddhist church, and in the summer time--I mean winter time mostly; we went in to town to the Japanese language school on Saturdays. During the spring they had this Hanamatsuri and the families around Denver would get together at the Denver Buddhist Church and they would put on shibai, Japanese plays. Actually, I looked forward to those things because they would have special Japanese food there like sushi and things, you know, Japanese food . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW:

Kind of like the Buddhist festival they hold today. Was the purpose similar?



- IRITANI: Yeah, it's celebrating the birth of the Buddha. Around Denver they call it the Hanamatsuri.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: I've not heard of that around here.
- IRITANI: Oh, I think probably it's a different sect--I'm not too sure. There are these two main sects--the Higashi Hongwanji and Nishi Hongwanji and, of course, there are others, you know, sects now days, but anyway I remember it as Hanamatsuri and had shibais, special music, special services, and --well, this is the time for the Buddhist Church to get donations . People would come in to donate to the church, and I remember on the wall there would be whole lineup of names and it told the name of the family and how much they donated. [LAUGHTER]
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Social pressure to donate, right?
- IRITANI: Yes, sure, that's how the church was able to support the priest. I remember some of them went to the University of Denver. They were getting an education as well as doing the church functions and teaching the Japanese language school.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: This Hanamatsuri--sounds like this was the major focus of social life for the Japanese community?
- IRITANI: Yes.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Did you have friends outside the Japanese community that you spent time with?

IRITANI: Well, yeah, later on there were some Japanese families that moved around Denver, especially around Sullivan. I remember visiting them once in a while. There was a NOGAMI family that lived a few miles away. I remember the boy later going on to Colorado School of Mines. I went there a couple of years. There's another ITO family a little further out of town. Then when we went to my cousin's place around Littleton and Englewood there was quite a Japanese community there and even today, I see a fellow by the name of NAKAYEMA-- SEIKEN NAKAYEMA. He is a member of Japanese Methodist Church and he went to Englewood High School and--no, he went to Littleton High School. I went to Englewood which is one of two high schools, sort of close-in together, and my cousins went to Littleton High School and I think later on they changed to Englewood. I don't know how that happened. Well, I remember the high school--some of my high school friends. . . . I was going through some of my stuff here and. . . . Did you want to get into that now or . . .



MATSUMOTO LOW: Sure, yes. Very much so. I would like to hear about your high school recollections.

IRITANI: Well, I remember attending the 45th Englewood High School reunion in 1986. That was the first high school reunion and my sister, Frances, and I went together and met Ms. ROBINSON. MARIE ROBINSON was my English teacher in high school. I sort of remembered her. She sort of paid special attention to me, and I remember she visited our home one time, and at this high school reunion she was there. For a few years after that whenever I went to Denver, I visited her. Of course, she is quite a bit older. I think she is probably in a nursing home right now. I met some of my teachers. There is one whose name was LEE BOWLING and he was my physics and chemistry teacher. I met some of the classmates. There is one fellow that I remember. His name is FRANCIS PACA. He wasn't at the reunion but he lives out in Virginia, and while we were going to high school we used to take special classes up at School of Mines. This is while we were seniors in high school, and at that time they were pushing science aspect in our education, and we were going to the School of Mines on a



IRITANI: special deal because I think the United States wanted to build up its defense, and we took a survey course at the School of Mines and . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Is this a university or college level institution?

IRITANI: Yes, College School of Mines is one of the top mining schools in the country, and so there were a few of us from Englewood High School, including this FRANCIS PACA. When I visited Washington, D. C., a few years ago I met FRANCIS PACA after all those years and just like myself, he's getting along in years. He's retired now.

MATSUMOTO LOW: When you went to these classes at School of Mines, did you have in the back of your mind some occupation that was kind of science-related?

IRITANI: Yes, I remember in high school I wrote a paper on petroleum or petroleum engineering, so I got pretty good grades in science and math and physics and all that, so I decided to go to the School of Mines, but there were very few Japanese-Americans there as I recall and. . . But then the war came along and then after the war I didn't go back to the School of Mines because



IRITANI: many of the Niseis after they graduated from college were not able to get jobs that they had studied for. Even students--Niseis graduating from Stanford or Berkeley couldn't get decent jobs and had to work in fruit stands and do gardening and so forth, so. . . . Well, that was one reason why I changed from School of Mines. After the war I enrolled at the University of Minnesota because I spent time there at Fort Snelling. Anyway, I went from engineering and all that stuff to social sciences and political science and the humanities--things of that sort.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's a pretty big shift from science background to social sciences. What brought about that change?

IRITANI: Well, I guess, a couple of reasons--that students--Niseis graduating from engineering and all that couldn't get jobs with the oil companies. It was unusual if they did land a job with an oil company, and also I felt that the war was such a terrible thing that we ought to try to work towards peace and better human relations, so that's why I went into--changed over from



IRITANI: engineering over into sociology and social work. Even then I didn't. . . . After college I went into the ministry but that's another story.

MATSUMOTO LOW: OK, I want you to delve into that a little bit later because I know that was such a major focus in your life. In your home growing up, did religion play an important part in your early childhood or later childhood?

IRITANI: Yes, my mother was a very religious person and she sent money back to some religious organization back in Okayama, you know, a few dollars every year until the day that she died. Also, I remember her after a day's work she would pray before the Buddhist altar, and so she was a very religious person, and with my father--it was sort of [LAUGHTER] "take it or leave it." As far as myself and my brothers and sister, my sister is still a member of the Buddhist Church in Denver because that was our parents' church and they keep in contact, and the funerals and all that was by Buddhist ceremony, but I think my brothers--they all turned to Christianity. I know DAN, the youngest one, is a member of the Denver Simpson United Methodist Church. My brother WILLIE up in Seattle belongs



IRITANI: to the Blaine Japanese Methodist Church. I think my brother ROY in Hawaii married a girl that was a member of the Episcopal Church. Anyway, I think they were married in Episcopal Church. I don't think he goes to church very much.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So nobody in your family then really followed the Buddhist faith?

IRITANI: No, I guess not, except my sister. Well, she'll go to all these things they have in Denver, and when there is a donation for the church, or creating a school of Buddhism in San Francisco, their headquarters, I think she donates.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What do you remember about life in your community? Was your family involved in the local Buddhist church?

IRITANI: Well, the Buddhist Church was the church in downtown Denver, but the only other aspect of that was they had the kateishukai. That was home meetings where, especially during the winter time when it wasn't too busy, the priest would come out to different homes. I remember there was one meeting at our home and Japanese neighbors would come by. This was in



IRITANI: the evening and the Buddhists would have a short service. And then we would have refreshments. That was the best part [LAUGHTER] that I liked but. . . . Well, that was about it.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Were there other community organizations?

IRITANI: No, no, I, well . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Or were they segregated by race?

IRITANI: I remember some of the Niseis played baseball. I don't know if Littleton had a team or not but I know Fort Lupton and Brighton and Denver --they all had teams. My Dad took me to some of those games, as I recall, and it took time to get out for practice and play those games. I never did get involved. I don't think I was a very good baseball player anyway, but I loved watching baseball. Yeah, that was about it.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What about your brothers or sister [FRANCES KAWANO]? Did they play baseball back then?

IRITANI: Well, they were sort of involved in 4-H Clubs and later--and also the Boy Scouts. I guess it's mostly 4-H clubs. My sister spent some time in it also. She was pretty good at sewing and cooking, because I remember she won a trip to Chicago, and



IRITANI: when she came back she said she met TOM HARMON who was the football star at Michigan [University] in those years, and I think maybe my sister maintains contacts with her 4-H sisters--members--even now. Yeah, my brothers were active in 4-H too. They raised some pigs and calves. I don't remember that I was involved--mostly my brothers. I guess I was doing something else. [chuckles]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you remember what that something else was?

IRITANI: Oh, no.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Did you have any other kinds of special interests then--hobbies that you remember from high school?

IRITANI: One thing I . . . First year of high school--I guess it was '38 and '39--I was in Japan. My brothers and sister were active in this club activity. Well, as far as having. . . . I think my brothers and sister had more hakujin friends than I did as I recall.

MATSUMOTO LOW: When I came over today, I was looking at some photographs of your family. You mentioned that you were the eldest of five children. Did you have a special role being the oldest son--chonan in the family?



IRITANI: Well, I wasn't too conscious of it . I know in later years my sister did mention it, but I didn't pay too much attention to it. Like we're trying to sell the property and we are all trying to work together. Each one has an equal share, how to dispose of it, and all that sort of stuff, but this idea--that chonon business, I . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: It didn't affect you that much? You don't remember if your parents really made you be responsible for your brothers and sister? Did they have any expectations of you?

IRITANI: Maybe that was one reason why I was sent to Japan by my parents. But they didn't pressure me in any way as I recall.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So you felt the parents treated you pretty much equally?

IRITANI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Both boys and girl because I . . .

IRITANI: Yeah, yeah.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That sounds unusual because many of this doesn't fit, you know, what you read that the children are treated differentially based on their gender.

[End Tape 1, Side A



[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Even though your parents didn't express anything to you, did you have any kind of perceptions about being treated differently or experiencing any kind of discrimination? Was prejudice going on while you were surrounded mostly by neighbors of hakujin families? Do you remember any of those feelings?

IRITANI: No, well, in the very first place we just. . . . When you live on the farm, the people, you know, are sort of miles away and we just didn't have too many dealings with them. There weren't any neighborhood picnics. For example, [for] Fourth of July picnics we usually got together with the Japanese community. My aunt and uncle or. . . . No, I don't remember too much.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Did you play with the neighbor children or did you usually just stay with your own brothers and sister and play?

IRITANI: Yes, I don't. . . . Yeah, there were some kids around. But it was just during school days. We didn't too much go there on the weekends, you know, the neighbor's home but it was just mostly during school days. I think my sister sort of maintained contact with some of the hakujins. I know in later years, even



IRITANI: after we came out to California after the war, some people would call me and [say], "Hey, do you remember me? We used to go to school back in Ash Grove or Englewood High School?" I had completely forgotten and they still remember.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you remember where you were when you heard the news about the bombing of Pearl Harbor because you said that was shortly after high school?

IRITANI: Let's see, I was. . . . On December 7, wasn't it? 1941. I was in first year at the Colorado School of Mines. I was a student there and, well, I didn't feel any pressure or prejudice. About the only thing that I remember is receiving the draft notice and they classified me as "1A" which is eligible for the draft or the military, and maybe a month or two later when I showed up at the draft board for something they changed that to "4C" after they saw that I was maybe [chuckles] a Japanese alien.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's enemy alien status.

IRITANI: Yeah, so I didn't make a fuss about that. Oh, here goes the telephone. [Interruption]



MATSUMOTO LOW: All right. So you'll continue on about what happened after you've gotten drafted and had your classification changed to "4C"?

IRITANI: Well, I think. . . . Well, I don't exactly remember the date it was changed over to "4C." But, anyway, I think I was-- probably in the summer time and then the Niseis later on, Niseis were able to volunteer, so I volunteered and they sent me up to Fort Snelling which is a Japanese language school.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You were still single at this time, obviously.

IRITANI: Oh, yes, yes. Oh, yes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Can you share what you remember about your training going to the MIS [Military Intelligence Service] and your impressions about that?

IRITANI: Well, I had some education in Japan back in '38 and '39 but I hadn't used the language or kept up and so, I guess, simply because I was in Japan a couple years and knew some of the language they sent me up to Fort Snelling. Anyway, the Military Intelligence Service Language School was training some of the Nisei boys to be interpreters and translators, and I was in the service from July of '44 until August of '46 when I



IRITANI: got discharged. Well, I remember several months at Fort Snelling going to these classes, then had basic training. It was in the winter time. We went to camp in Blanding--no, Fort McClellan in Alabama, and this was in the winter time as I recall and remember taking a long ten to twelve-mile--maybe it was a twenty-mile hike in the winter time with a heavy wool overcoat and a big pack on the back, and some of those small Nisei fellows--I don't understand how they made it, but our feet were real sore, as I recall.. Then we got shipped overseas and a long train ride from Minneapolis to someplace--to some port on the West Coast, and then we landed up in Manila and we stayed there at the fair grounds. I think it was Rizal Stadium and I recall Manila--it was just thoroughly bombed. Buildings had big holes. Streets had big holes. This is the effect of the war. Then we went up to Tokyo. When I was there [we] stayed in the Finance Building, and this was under the staff called Supreme Command of Allied Powers, and they had different sections there, and I was put into the religions division and did some translation work.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Can I backtrack a little bit to Manila? We were still at war?



IRITANI: Yeah, this was about. . . . Let's see, I think they. . . . The end of the war came some place along there and the war was over as I recall. Let's see, I think--wasn't it--PRESIDENT [HARRY] TRUMAN was in office at that time and then Japan surrendered some place along in there. I think the war was over so I never saw any active duty.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I see. I would still think that the anti-Japanese sentiment would be really strong at that time being, you know, based in Manila.

IRITANI: Well, we didn't associate very much with . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Filipinos.

IRITANI: . . .with Filipinos. There were barbers and shoe polishers and when the GIs went to the mess hall or came out, the Filipino natives would stand on both sides with empty buckets, and they took our left-over coffee or left-over food, and we would just dump it into their buckets. You know, they were just starving. They were glad to take whatever the GIs had left over, you know. So, no, I don't recall any fighting going on. I think the war was over--peace treaty--Japan had surrendered at that time. I forgot the exact date of the surrender, [August 15, 1945] but. .



IRITANI: . . And Tokyo was just devastated--just leveled and didn't see many of the natives around the place either.

MATSUMOTO LOW: How long were you stationed there in Tokyo?

IRITANI: Well, it was probably about a year. It wasn't much more than a year because I got discharged in August of '46, and my disembarkation point was Camp Beale in Marysville, California.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Can you describe that year in Tokyo? What were the main things that you were doing? Day-to-day kinds of things?

IRITANI: Yeah, during the working hours just sitting in this office there doing translation work and some interpreting, and--but in the evenings I would just hang around with some religious friends of mine. We had Bible study and prayer meetings and we did some sight-seeing. Of course, I did visit my cousin, you know, aunt and uncle out in Okayama. They didn't have much to say as I recall. Of course, after the war they were just beaten and barely making a living so . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: How were they making a living at that time?

IRITANI: They were all rice farmers.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Individual farms then? Nothing large?



IRITANI: Yeah, individual farms.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So you could see a lot of devastation--you were saying that things were just flattened out.

IRITANI: Yeah. I just felt the war was a terrible thing. They should stay out of war if at all possible.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You were discharged in August of 1946? What happened after your discharge? Where did you work-- in terms of occupation? And your life?

IRITANI: I guess I must have looked around for work. I went back to Minneapolis because Fort Snelling was in St. Paul which was next door, and I went back to University of Minnesota and, like I said previously, changed over from science and all that. I had some credits from the Colorado School of Mines and transferred them to University of Minnesota and I took classes in sociology and social work, social research, and things of that sort and graduated in '49. Then I think after graduation I went to San Francisco to look for a job, and I think I stayed at the "Y" and looked for a job, and I think I was working as a drug store or delivery boy and dishwasher in some drive-in-places, as I recall. I got work in a clothing factory. Then I think I was



IRITANI: going to the Japanese Methodist Church--the Pine Methodist Church and got acquainted with some people there, and I think one of the ministers talked to me about going into the ministry, so I started [at] the seminary. I went into the seminary. First year was at USC [University of Southern California] in Los Angeles. The School of Religion was on the campus there, but later on they moved out to Claremont and I stayed there at Centenary Japanese Methodist Church a year and came up to Berkeley and got my Bachelor of Divinity degree from the Pacific School of Religion .

MATSUMOTO LOW: After you got your degree in social work and you went to San Francisco, did you apply for jobs that were related to your academic training?

IRITANI: Well, I was waiting for some kind of response, and so . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: What kind of reaction --you fill out an application , you take it in, people just say, "We don't have anything available." Or did you actually have any kinds of interviews?

IRITANI: Yeah, it was--it didn't seem like any prospects. Maybe that's one reason why I went into the ministry. Well, I guess I didn't know people that were in social work and I didn't--probably if I



- IRITANI:                   went down to the County Department of Welfare or something of that sort, or family services--I think I tried, but I just didn't seem to get anywhere.
- MATSUMOTO LOW:       Did you experience any kind of overt or covert discrimination at that time?
- IRITANI:                   No, I don't remember or didn't realize being discriminated.
- MATSUMOTO LOW:       Just nothing available?
- IRITANI:                   Well, yeah, instances of discrimination and all that is very subtle sort of thing. You don't know if it's discrimination or whether you're not adequately prepared or you're not suitable or what. They never tell. Even now, so I hear.
- MATSUMOTO LOW:       Were there jobs that were even available, though, that you were qualified for? You know, as a young person, sometimes, you don't know where to look and how to look.
- IRITANI:                   Yeah. I think that was more of my case there. I don't know how come I landed up in San Francisco. Well, I don't remember too much from those days. [chuckles]
- MATSUMOTO LOW:       Well, Marysville. What did you think about Marysville? Maybe you wanted to go to a big city? Or did you think the prospects of getting a job were better?



- IRITANI: Yes, I think that was it.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: That would make sense.
- IRITANI: Yeah, Marysville was just a small town. Camp Beale--I guess it was an Air Force Base.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: So then you ended up in Berkeley and finished up your divinity degree there, and where did that eventually lead you in terms of your career?
- IRITANI: Well, I went into the church ministry. The Japanese churches had a special conference. It's called a Pacific Japanese Provisional Methodist Conference and they had churches mostly on the West Coast--Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, Portland, Seattle, and there is one in Wapato, Fresno, Sacramento, and there was one in Denver. I served a couple years in Oxnard and couple years in Portland, Oregon. Incidentally, I got married after seminary and my married life started in Oxnard and that's where SUSANNA was born, our oldest child and . . .
- MATSUMOTO LOW: You have to tell me about your courtship. Where in the world did you meet JOANNE?



IRITANI: Well, I guess living in San Francisco we got involved in Methodist--Japanese Methodist Church --Pine Methodist Church, and the young adults--they were pretty active and every year they would have this Lake Tahoe Young Peoples Christian Conference and, as I recall, this first time I met her there, and then she must have made an impression because I guess she was teaching in Berkeley--I mean Oakland someplace, and then through the church ministers and so forth I inquired about JOANNE and found that she was living in Bakersfield, and so I guess we started corresponding, and I remember visiting her in Bakersfield a couple of times and so decided to get married.

MATSUMOTO LOW: How long were you corresponding before you got married?

IRITANI: Oh, it was --or maybe a short time--about a year or so. I think REVEREND GOTO sort of acted--sort of a go-between, you might say. He encouraged us. I think, as I recall, he performed the ceremony, and there were a few fellow ministers -- REVEREND LLOYD WAKE and my brother ROY came out from Hawaii. I think he was living in Hawaii at that time, and J. K. SASAKI and . . .



MATSUMOTO LOW: So between the time that you met and the time you got married it was less than what--a year and a half?

IRITANI: Yeah, yeah, I don't know exactly how long it was.

MATSUMOTO LOW: About a year and a half then? It wasn't a real long courtship then?

IRITANI: No, it wasn't a real long one. Well, I got. . . . REVEREND GOTO said, "She's OK." [LAUGHTER]

MATSUMOTO LOW: [LAUGHTER] She's OK. Now, she was teaching school in Bakersfield at this time, and then were you attached to a church or a congregation?

IRITANI: Yeah, she. . . . Her parents [GEORGE AND TOME ONO] are founders of the Japanese Methodist Church in Bakersfield. It's called St. Andrews United Methodist Church, but they were farmers--very active in the church there, and she is active in the Sunday School and the community church groups, you know--Council of Churches and all that.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What about you? Were you affiliated with a church in Berkeley?

IRITANI: Yes, I was going to the seminary . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, still in seminary school . . .



IRITANI: Well, just finishing up--I think in '55, I got my Bachelor of Divinity degree.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So that's a--it's a three-year degree? It took you three years to study--like a special program after you have your Bachelors? I'm not familiar . . .

IRITANI: Yeah, after. . . . It's a professional degree and after four years of college, then you go on to seminary and just like going into medicine or law .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Like a graduate school?

IRITANI: So, it sort of depends. Some people, I guess, could make it in two years. Three years because usually the young people going into the ministry and in seminary they have to have church work to support them. So when I was going to Pacific School of Religion, I served one year in San Jose Japanese Methodist Church and a year or two with the Alameda Japanese Methodist Church, where you stay at the church there or church parsonage and . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Right.

IRITANI: . . .they help support you.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Right. And so did you then affiliate with that church after you graduated? Did you become a Methodist minister?

IRITANI: The Methodist system is you're guaranteed a church . It's a connectional system and because it is a connectional system and each Methodist minister is guaranteed a church, well, some of them moved around quite a bit so about every two years, we were getting moved around, and I didn't think I was very effective as a preacher, and then the fact that we were getting moved around, and so I left the ministry and settled in Bakersfield and went into social work, where the kids, you know, went through grade school and high school.

MATSUMOTO LOW: How long did you actually stay in the ministry?

IRITANI: Oh, it was about ten-eleven years.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, you--I mean that was a long assignment. Then you moved every so many years?

IRITANI: Yeah, every couple of years.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That must be very hard then for young ministers.

IRITANI: Yes, it is hard for Methodist ministers, especially. Well, there were some cases where Methodist ministers would stay for ten-twelve years. It's not too common but there are ministers --



IRITANI: most of them get moved around periodically. Some of the ones that are able will spend four or six years as a district superintendent. Then they would go back into the local church ministry again.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Looking back on that time, was that an adventure for you or was it really more of an unhappy situation when you had to move every few years?

IRITANI: Well, it was interesting meeting people, trying to help people, performing marriages, funerals. It is an important point in a person's life and so. . . . My wife was very helpful. She taught Sunday school and [was] very supportive.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That was eleven years of your life then. Within that eleven years you moved about five times?

IRITANI: Well, it's about . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Every two years then.

IRITANI: Every couple of years.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So by then you really wanted to set down your roots?

IRITANI: Well, SUSANNA was born in Oxnard. That was the first year--first church after seminary, and then I think we moved--we



IRITANI: relocated to Portland, Oregon. That's where my son, KENNY, was born.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: And then I think I left the ministry in Portland and we settled in Bakersfield and that's where the youngest daughter, BONITA, was born.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: So [chuckles] they were born in three different places.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What was the draw of Bakersfield after you left the ministry?

IRITANI: Well, we went there because that's my wife's home town. Her family lives there--three brothers and the sister and parents are there. Well, after leaving church we didn't have hardly any assets or anything so we had to stay with them for a while, and then after a while we rented the house next door and then after a while she got--able to work and I got, you know, steady work with the County Welfare Department. She got work with the Bakersfield City Schools and we were able to buy our own house.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. That's a big accomplishment. Can you tell me about your work with Kern County?



IRITANI: Yeah, it was interesting. I like working with people. Of course, I started out with family services and social work, and welfare has changed down through the years and at that time the kid who was truant and didn't show up for school, the social worker went out after him to see what's the matter. But now days we don't pay attention with truancy or things like that. Unless the children shoot somebody or get into real serious things like that, you know, social workers are not involved it seems like and . . . . Well from family services I went into adult services and the program called "In-Home Support Services, IHSS." This is mostly helping people live in their own homes with the help of a housekeeper by the hour or, you know, maybe -- usually they get paid by the hour and we have to make home calls and make an assessment and select . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: This is like home assistance living?

IRITANI: Yeah, yeah.

MATSUMOTO LOW: People, perhaps, that were disabled or cannot live independently without assistance?

IRITANI: Most of my families were Hispanic but I remember one Filipino man who was blind and I think also diabetic because



IRITANI: the nurse came out every couple days to give him his diabetes shot. He was the one who introduced me to bitter melon and a few things Filipino . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: There's few Filipino families out there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Of those two areas, the focus--what did you enjoy more--did you find more fulfilling?

IRITANI: You mean the church ministry? Social work?

MATSUMOTO LOW: You were saying at first you did family services and you did home assistance living.

IRITANI: Oh, well, either one-- it was services to the people--working with people. The thing I didn't feel too comfortable in church work was, I guess, preaching and conducting group meetings and addressing a group. Whereas, with social work and in that area it's more on a one-to-one . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: . . . situations and making home calls. I didn't like too much sitting in an office, so they offered me a job as a supervisor of the Welfare Department. I didn't think I liked that.

[LAUGHTER]



- MATSUMOTO LOW: Even though that paid more?
- IRITANI: Yes, even though that paid more.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: No use getting paid more if you are unhappy.
- IRITANI: Yeah.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: So you persisted in that area--social work from '62 to '86--so 24 years!
- IRITANI: Well, was it that long? Yeah, I retired in '86.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: On your biographical sketch, that's what it says-- from '62 to '86. That's a long time to be at one profession. So you must have really thought that was the right place for you?
- IRITANI: Yeah, social work from '62 to '86. Well, it began with children's and family services and adult services. There were other things--adoptions and protective services. I think I did try protective services a while, and I was interested in adoptions but I don't think I got into that.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: You were saying that social work has changed tremendously from the time you began to now. Could you see yourself doing social work now if you were still younger and you had to go out and work?



IRITANI:

Well, yeah, it seems like social workers are really overloaded and there are so many problems in family life today, crime and hardly any support from the schools and such institutions as the church. It's very difficult. It's very demanding and I would suppose, unless you really like to work at the office, you get burned out. Right now, I am a member of Public Health Advisory Committee to the [Sacramento County] Board of Supervisors, and right now their monthly meetings are about the budget and talking about cutting health clinics and services to those that really need it, particularly, you know, the poor, the minorities, and so it's very demanding. It's difficult work. It takes some person who has a lot of dedication to hang in there.

MATSUMOTO LOW:

You were doing social work and, really, as you were raising a family. Did this job afford you to have some flexibility in terms of being able to spend some time with your family and things like that?

IRITANI:

Yes, well, when the kids were growing up during junior high and high school, we encouraged them to take part in school activities, especially the girls in the choir, and they took music lessons. And then KEN--he was active in the Boy Scouts when



IRITANI: he was in junior high and, of course, he was in Little League and played baseball. That was his best sport and he made All San Joaquin Valley team as a pitcher, and he got an award from the Helms Foundation and one of the Giants--I forget the name of the player-- presented all these Southern San Joaquin High School champions a certificate. I remember attending Candlestick Park and it was cold--Candlestick is cold.

:

[chuckles] KEN, he was pretty good all the way round--swimming, football, basketball, baseball, but his best sport was baseball. He tried one year at UC Davis and they had him practicing from the first day of school in September, and after one year he decided that he did not want to continue so he just dropped baseball altogether.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Were there a lot of other young Japanese-Americans in the community where, you know, your children went to high school so that he was competing with both Caucasians and Japanese?

IRITANI: Well, he was best. . . . Even now he is competing mostly with blacks, because most of the good athletes are Blacks.

MATSUMOTO LOW: And Whites too?



IRITANI: Yes, so when it comes to football, I don't think Asians and Japanese are not aggressive enough to become football players, but in baseball you can . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Size also.

IRITANI: Yeah, size. Now days you've got high school players over 200 pounds. But now days the Asians, unless they have special talent like being fast, or in baseball they have good skills pitching or playing shortstop, you know, it's hard. So, well, there weren't too many offers for sports as I recall.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, it sounds a lot like he was really outstanding in many sports but, you know, he made his own decision once he got to college. That was something he wanted to continue doing. That's wonderful that he had the opportunity. What about your other children? What were their interests when they were growing up?

IRITANI: Well, SUSANNA liked music when she was in high school and . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: SUSANNA is the oldest?



IRITANI: Yes, SUSANNA is the oldest. She was in high school choir and she dabbled some in art in college also and was on the college newspaper. And then BONITA--she tried some volleyball and took music lessons and she played in the school band, and she was on the school debate team, and I remember taking the debate team to some debate tournaments in San Francisco and a few other places. And I think for all kids and especially Asians--they are good in science and math but not too good in communicating, and so I encourage all high school and those in college to take English, speech, debate and public speaking.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: That's where they are really weak. It's unusual, you know, to have good speakers like GEORGE TAKEI and CONGRESSMEN [NORMAN] MINETA and [CONGRESSMAN ROBERT] MATSUI. They are mostly lawyers, I guess, but it's unusual. I've gone to a lot of Asian-American conferences or conferences where there are Asians involved and you can understand very clearly the non-Asians, but Asians--even those educated or born here and especially



IRITANI: those that come from India and Japan --they are hard to understand. They will know their subjects but [chuckles] they are hard to understand.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You mean because of the accent or because of their syntax-- how they phrase their ideas?

IRITANI: They just don't communicate very well. Yeah, they have an accent and the grammar--sometimes it's a little bit different. Probably the hardest people to understand are the Filipinos and maybe the Indians--Asian-Indians. There's a lot of professionals--quite a few among them, and they are a little bit hard to understand. Even now, like CHANCELLOR [DR. CHANG-LIN] TIEN of [University of California] Berkeley who just resigned. He is very forceful and aggressive and so forth and he knows his subject, but as far as communicating and as a public speaker, he's no [PRESIDENT] JOHN KENNEDY, for example, [chuckles] which is not held against him, but even for young Asians. . . . Well, all students, I think, they need to communicate effectively and clearly.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Has BONITA used her debate skills and oral communication skills in her profession then? As an adult?



IRITANI: Well, she's got a good education, including a Masters degree from Stanford, but she's back East and has a baby. I think also in communicating there's a function of a person's self-esteem and even ethnicity. I think a person from Japan or United States simply because Japan and United States are super powers, it helps. You know, if you are a citizen of that country where somebody from the Philippines or Mexico where politics are in shambles and economy is not much to brag about, you know, you can't say too much about a foreign country.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: So, being able to communicate and self-esteem is a function of a lot of things, so I guess I couldn't just emphasize the mechanical aspects of communicating.

MATSUMOTO LOW: There's something else going on there. It's really complicated. What is it that makes somebody a good speaker--a powerful speaker . . .

IRITANI: Yeah.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Because you're right. You think about all the charismatic figures in history, you don't see very many who are Asians.



- IRITANI: Yeah, yeah, that's right.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: And usually you see a lot of doctors, dentists, science-oriented as you said, but not too many people go into occupations that require them to be out in public speaking.
- IRITANI: I think the outstanding Asians probably, with the exception of GEORGE TAKEI, like [GEORGE] TSUTAKAWA who is a sculptor out in the Northwest--it's because of their skills, you know, as a sculptor, and although TSUTAKAWA did teach for ten years or so at the University of Washington. Let's see, who else can I think of --DR. SAMMY LEE--he's sort of known for his Olympic feats in diving.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: What about people in your family? Are there people in your family who are very outspoken and enjoy speaking in the public?
- IRITANI: No. [chuckles]
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Your brother. You mentioned your brother.
- IRITANI: Yeah, one brother is a retired doctor and . . .
- MATSUMOTO LOW: M.D.?



IRITANI: Yes, and he's retired in Hawaii. The other brother, WILLIE, he majored in horticulture as a professor at Washington State University and specialized in potatoes and I guess he knows his subject, and maybe his knowledge of the subject is better than communicating, although, I don't know, he managed to become President of American Potato Association [1984]. I guess you have to be able to communicate to hold such a high position.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Yes.

IRITANI: So, [chuckles] well, communicating is a function of several things, I guess.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Personality too. I see the big difference. My daughter--same thing. She's just --she's not really articulate but she's very good in math and science. So it may be something we really don't have that much control over. So I think it's really good that you urged your children to take public speaking and debate. So, let's see, we can talk a little bit more about marriage and family. I'm wondering if you want to take a break here. I'm going to stop the tape anyway.

[End Tape 1, Side B]



[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

MATSUMOTO LOW: We were talking about your family life, specifically we were talking about your children. I want to find out a little bit more about where your children are now and what they are doing and also about your grandchildren.

IRITANI: OK, let's see, the oldest is my daughter, SUSANNA. She's in Washington, D. C. She went to Bakersfield College, Chico State, and also Cal State in Northridge where she got a Master's degree to teach speech handicapped and worked for a while in the Glendale School District. But after her first husband died, she moved to Washington, D. C., and sort of started anew, and she's into ceramics and choir, and she's remarried and seems to be getting along, and they are expecting a child in December. Now, the second child, the son, is KENNY. He lives here in Sacramento and this is the reason my wife and I moved from Bakersfield to Sacramento is to be with KENNY and his children, and they have two boys, DANIEL, six, and KEVIN is four, and just a couple weeks ago they had a new child, another baby boy named JACOB. So it's a little hard for LESLEY, his wife, to manage. My wife especially, we try to help out with



IRITANI:

child care because KENNY and his work--working for Texas Instruments he does a lot of traveling, and that's why in one of these telephone calls I got he was saying he had to go to San Francisco and Washington, D. C., sometimes--well, maybe, once or twice a month to Dallas, Texas, which is the home office of Texas Instruments. And then in Redwood City, there's another office there. So he's getting along pretty well. When he graduated from UC Davis, he got a job right away with ARTHUR ANDERSON, which is one of the largest accounting firms. After six or seven years he lost the job. It's a little bit hard to tell whether it was due to glass ceiling or reorganization or he wasn't suited for the job or what, but, anyway, he was fortunate to get this new job with Texas Instruments, and I admire him because he is able to have a good large family, as well as building a house here in the Pocket area. My youngest daughter, BONITA, I think, in all the test scores and so forth, she scored the highest, like on the SAT [Scholastic Assessment Test]. And she was on the debate team, and she went to UC Santa Cruz which is an interesting school where the emphasis is on independent classroom--



IRITANI: independent study. And while there some of her professors helped her out in psychology, and she decided to go to Stanford because she applied for scholarships through the JACL and she got a \$5000 Kuwahara scholarship, and she started at the Stanford there, but I think if you go into psychology, you have to go on to a doctorate, and after she got her Masters, she and her husband moved to Seattle where he finished his graduate work, and now they are in Philadelphia. He's with the University of Pennsylvania on a project, and they have a child so she is not able to work, but she wants to go to Bryn Mar and go into social work.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Is your son-in-law affiliated with the University or is he just . . .

IRITANI: No, he's just in a research project and after this project is finished, well, he's going to have to look for something else. I guess he's applied for different teaching jobs or research jobs.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Your grandchild in Philadelphia--that's quite a distance. You don't get to see her. Is that a little girl?

IRITANI: Yeah, her name is MARISA.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh, and how old is she?



IRITANI: She's, I think, about five.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So you have her, and then KENNY now has three sons . . .

IRITANI: Yes, three.

MATSUMOTO LOW: . . . that's her grandson--four total grandchildren. How often are you able to spend time with your grandchildren down here in Sacramento?

IRITANI: Oh, my wife spends maybe four or five times a week, depending on how busy or how often KENNY is away on these trips, and also LESLEY has Junior League, and now she's getting active in school--PTAs and swimming lessons for the kids and soccer and all that so--yeah, well, so probably we talk everyday on the phone or see them three or four times a week or oftener.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Keeps you busy then it sounds like.

IRITANI: Yeah, we really enjoy being with the grandkids.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I guess while I was talking to you yesterday, you began to share with me some of your family reunions. Would you like to talk a little bit about that and tell me how often you get together as a family and who does the organization?



IRITANI:

Well, the first time my family--you know, there were five of us--got together in Las Vegas. Now, my brother ROY--especially the people from Hawaii--likes to go to Reno and Las Vegas, so that's why we ended up. . . . No, I don't like to play the slots or any of that, but, anyway, we had a good time. It was this spring, and not only the five in our family and most of their spouses and some of the grandkids were there, but also my two cousins from Colorado. This is the first time that we had a family reunion of this sort, and I think it is a good thing. I remember an article in the newspaper just recently about this talk about family values, and so much crime and young people and gangs and so forth, and this writer stressed having family reunions periodically is a good thing, and so we were able to get together and everybody seemed to enjoy it, and I've been trying to gather material to put together a little booklet like a family history for the IRITANI's. You know, have a few photographs and family history and maybe the genealogy of each of the families, and it should be interesting because a lot of them married outside, you know, the Japanese --or a Japanese group, and so I hope we can have some more of these



IRITANI: reunions in the future. Heretofore, it's been when somebody dies for a funeral we get together but we ought to have these for better occasions.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Yes, I agree. You mentioned that there is a lot of out-marriage. Can you talk about that a little bit? What's been the kind of diversity within your family?

IRITANI: Well, my own children--they all married non-Nikkei.  
BONITA--I think her husband is European, and SUSANNA is married to RICK MINARD, and I understand when I attended her wedding in Washington, D. C., this year that his grandparents are related to ancestors coming over on the Mayflower which is several hundred years ago, and I'm trying to get RICK, my son-in-law, to write a brief family history, so . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Any responses to that at all?

IRITANI: He's pretty busy. I hope he's working on it. I told him. . . . He gave me about fifteen- twenty-page thing and it was real complicated. I didn't know much about it and I asked him if he could reduce it to couple of pages. I hope he's working on it.



MATSUMOTO LOW: I'm going to backtrack a little bit. I noticed that there is a trophy sitting here on the table and a photograph, and we talked just very fleetingly when we turned off the tape recorder. This is something from your real early school years--your elementary school years. Can you tell us about that?

IRITANI: Yes, it's . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: It looks very distinguished.

IRITANI: . . . well, it says here, "Scholarship, Ash Grove, 1935." My name is on it and it's pretty tarnished. It's a small cup about ten inches high.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Is it solid silver? It looks like it.

IRITANI: Yes, probably coated. When I graduated from Ash Grove [Elementary School] . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: It's very heavy.

IRITANI: . . . I think there were two given. I received one and then another girl received one, and then this is a small photo that was taken with the cup.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What was the award for?

IRITANI: Well, it's a . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: It says "Scholarship." Were you a straight-A student?



IRITANI: Yeah, I suppose so. I think perfect attendance too.

[LAUGHTER]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Smart and healthy!

IRITANI: Well, I don't know about being very smart, but . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: This is you in the photograph next to the trophy?

IRITANI: Yes, the scholarship and the cup.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's very shiny in this picture. Brand new.

IRITANI: Yeah, brand new at the time.

MATSUMOTO LOW: But I think it has a lot more character now. This was in elementary school. You look like--this must have been when you were older. It couldn't have been elementary school. Is it high school?

IRITANI: No, eighth grade.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, really? You look very mature-looking for eighth grade. You're very confident-looking. Maybe you were scared.  
[LAUGHTER] Your hair is very thick--black combed hair and nice suit and flower in your lapel.

IRITANI: Well, when I graduated from Englewood High School, I lost two years because I was in Japan, but, anyway, when I graduated from Englewood High School, I got a State Merit



- IRITANI: Scholarship and on that I was able to start at the Colorado School of Mines. But the war came along so I didn't finish.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Then you were competing with all the students at your school, so that was quite an honor to you to get that scholarship.
- IRITANI: High school, you know, you have a larger student body and they gave out several.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. Your parents must have been really proud then. You were saying they encouraged all of you to get an education. It sounds like all your brothers --all of you are professionals.
- IRITANI: Yes, all boys were able to go to college except my sister because she married early and, of course, she has the largest family but they are all doing well.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: This was wonderful. Now, this-- [INAUDIBLE] picture of yourself when you received the award and maybe now too. That would be a nice photograph. OK, I think I'm going ahead and stop it here.
- IRITANI: OK.



SESSION 2, July 22, 1996

[Tape 2, Side A, continued]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Today is Monday, July 22, and I returned to the home of FRANK and JOANNE IRITANI to continue FRANK's oral history, and this is our second session. Just before we started the tape, FRANK had mentioned that we really hadn't got a chance to talk about JOANNE's activities because, obviously, it is very important and central to his life. I was looking at your biographical information and I noticed that you just celebrated your 40th Anniversary.

IRITANI: Oh, well, that wasn't a big deal.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, 40 years is quite an accomplishment, you know, it really is. Congratulations! That's wonderful!

IRITANI: Thank you.

MATSUMOTO LOW: But we'd like to talk a little bit now about JOANNE's background and her accomplishments too, and I think that is



MATSUMOTO LOW: really a tribute to you, that you really want to highlight

JOANNE. She's so central to your life.

IRITANI: Well, her--maybe, I might have mentioned this before but her parents, GEORGE and TOME ONO, were very active in the Japanese Methodist Church in Bakersfield when they first arrived many years ago, and also JOANNE and her brothers and sister were active in the church but, I think probably JOANNE was the most active, and she's followed through being a minister's wife when I was in church work, and I'm very appreciative of her support, not only as a wife, but as a mother. She's had quite a few accomplishments. Let's see, I was wondering--did we get into the children--our children?

MATSUMOTO LOW: I think you shared briefly about where they are living now, but I think it would be nice to be able to talk about that a little bit more in depth.

IRITANI: Yeah, I think through our church work, mention was made where SUSANNA was born in Oxnard which was our first church after I got my--finished my seminary work, and then KENNY was born in Portland, Oregon, which was our next church, the way we moved around. And then after that I left



IRITANI: the church for various reasons, and BONITA, the youngest, was born in Bakersfield, and I'm quite proud of the children. SUSANNA is. . . . All three were able to go through college and some graduate work, and SUSANNA trained to be a speech therapist. She got her masters in speech therapy at Cal State, Northridge, and worked for a while in the Glendale School District in Southern California. Now, KENNY, he was outstanding in several areas. He was president of his Senior Class at West Bakersfield High School and took a little debate, and in athletics he was an All Star pitcher, and he got selected on the All Star Northern California team and received an award at the Candlestick Park from the Giants' outstanding player, JACK CLARK. This was in 1978. But, anyway . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: You had mentioned that earlier about his achievements.

IRITANI: Oh, OK.

MATSUMOTO LOW: No, I'm glad you brought this up again because you didn't mention before that he was student body president of his high school. Was there a large Nikkei community there?

IRITANI: No, it was a small community.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Mostly Caucasian then?



- IRITANI: Yes. Of course, there were a few African-Americans and if it weren't for them we wouldn't have much of a football team or track or anything. They were the outstanding athletes.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: So if he was student body president and he was involved in sports, it sounds like he was just really a well-rounded individual--well liked and respected by probably the teachers as well as the students?
- IRITANI: Yes. And, well, he went on to UC Davis and then after Davis, he graduated, and he was on the honor roll in Davis, and his first job was with ARTHUR ANDERSON ACCOUNTING CO., and that lasted about six or seven years and . . .
- MATSUMOTO LOW: What was he doing at ARTHUR ANDERSON's?
- IRITANI: Well, he was. . . . ARTHUR ANDERSON is a large accounting firm, but they were also in consulting, and I was wondering what he did--a young, inexperienced man doing consulting. Seemed like it would demand somebody with experience and more education--older person--but, anyway, he was with them for a while and then he got laid off, and fortunately he got another job with Texas Instruments. That's his current job. He seems to be doing pretty well. He does a



IRITANI: lot of traveling around, but anyway, he's able to keep his family going. They have three children--all three boys, and he does a lot of traveling around.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What's his capacity at Texas Instruments?

IRITANI: He's a program manager working with state and local governments on computer software. Well, that's a little bit . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, that's a great area to be in now--you have to have computer literacy. He'll always have a job.

IRITANI: And then BONITA--she was quite active in school--West High School--in the band. She was on the debate team. Then she went on to UC, Santa Cruz, and then she got a scholarship--the Kuwahara \$5000 JACL scholarship, and on that she went to Stanford and got a Masters in psychology.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's wonderful!

IRITANI: Right now she has a baby so they are back--[she] and her husband are back in Philadelphia, but he works on a project and she wants to go into social work so she's enrolled in Bryn Mawr College.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's following your footsteps--social work, psychology, the human services.



IRITANI: Yeah. Well, getting back to my wife now, she went to UC, Berkeley, and majored in Education and I think she taught for a couple of years around Oakland and then went back to her hometown in Bakersfield, and she is Special Education teacher, and she seems to have done pretty well.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You had mentioned that she taught a few years in Berkeley. That was not, you know, that long after the war. Was it difficult for her to find a job?

IRITANI: Well, she didn't say. Seemed like she found a job right a way after she got her--finished up at Berkeley.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Because I heard the opposite stories of people who were very well qualified and educated were not able to get a job in their profession.

IRITANI: Well, maybe she didn't like what was offered and she moved back to her hometown of Bakersfield, and she started teaching school there. But anyway she got several awards. Here's one-- in 1974 is the "Outstanding Classroom Teacher Award" presented by the Bakersfield Rotary Club and it's an

: "Outstanding Classroom Teacher's Award for Grades K to 3 for 1974." This award says , "The Visiting Committee noted with



IRITANI: favor your excellence in the classroom. Your concern for the welfare of each child was impressive to the visitors. They were also aware of your many interests and insatiable desire to keep abreast with what is new in education." And then . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's still true today. She is forever seeking out new ideas.

IRITANI: This is "Freedom's Foundation Teacher's Honor Medal."

MATSUMOTO LOW: What was that award medal?

IRITANI: Well, the article in the Pacific Citizen dated April 14, 1978, says, "Honors Medal awarded Nisei teaching mentally-retarded. JOANNE IRITANI was recently awarded the 'Freedom's Foundation Teacher's Honor Medal' for her work with trainable mentally-retarded students who are ready for jobs in school here. The Teacher's Foundation annually recognizes teachers displaying exceptional efforts to teach patriotism, responsible citizenship, and a better understanding of America. JOANNE, on the staff of Rafer Johnson School since 1966, coordinates programs involving students in music and art. She directed the school's Bicentennial Program as well as other special events."



IRITANI: And then another award--she went on and got her Masters in Cal State, Bakersfield, and this was in 1985, and there's a letter from the School of Education and also the Dean: "Dear MRS.

IRITANI: I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the faculty on the School of Education that you have been named the Outstanding Graduate Student for 1985 in the Special Education Concentration of the MA degree in Education. "

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, that is really an accomplishment. JOANNE is so modest. You'll never know all the things that she has done. She just says, well, she used to be in education.

IRITANI: Then the latest one was in 1988. She was entered in the Teacher's Hall of Fame by the Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce. And also there was a California State Proclamation, "Day of the Teacher," by the California Legislature, and I think there was one from each school selected, and JOANNE was selected from Rafer Johnson School and this article was in the Rafu Shimpo.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You know, the "Day of the Teacher," that's been the traditional celebration. I don't know when it began but . . .

IRITANI: Oh, you are familiar with that too.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Right. That's wonderful! So then she was honored through the Chamber of Commerce in Bakersfield?

IRITANI: Yeah, Bakersfield--Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce.

MATSUMOTO LOW: She had a really active career.

IRITANI: Then this is in the teaching profession. She was also active in the community-- I don't know how she [chuckles] raised her family--you know, the kids . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: At the same time, she was raising a family and been a wife.

IRITANI: Yeah, this is--active in her own church and Bakersfield Council of Churches, and she was given the "Outstanding Layman Award." I don't know exactly what year that was but I think it was just a few years before we moved up here to Sacramento. She was active with the District Methodist Churches, and here in Sacramento she is active with SUMU, which is Sacramento United Methodist Union, and it's a group of all the Methodist Churches in this area. She's been active with that. They call it the SUMU. Well, besides that, she has time too, during summer. . . . Here's a bunch of awards that she's won. She entered at the Kern County Fair flower arrangement exhibits.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Can you describe what that arrangement is? It's an Ikebana arrangement.

IRITANI: Well, I don't know.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Can you just describe what you see.

IRITANI: This is a photograph of a flower display she had at the County Fair and it's a First Prize Award and it's in one of those bunches of ribbons I got there, but anyway . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: I'm holding many ribbons--many first, second prizes, third prize awards, and they are all in flower arranging?

IRITANI: Yeah, flower arranging.

MATSUMOTO LOW: This has been a passion of hers too?

IRITANI: She's still doing that here in Sacramento. She's with Ikebana and MOLLY KIMURA. And they have periodic meetings.

Well, that is one of the pictures that I took.

MATSUMOTO LOW: This is beautiful. It is very characteristic of Japanese arranging . . .

IRITANI: Well, I don't know too much about flower arrangements.

MATSUMOTO LOW: . . . with its simplicity. It's got yellow daisies in it and then a



MATSUMOTO LOW: very--a singular pine branch. It's very striking, and you can see the first prize ticket on the bottom of the display. It's in a kind of woven wooden holder.

IRITANI: It's sort of . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: My goodness! Sounds like she. . . . Most of us need twenty-four hours of every day to be able to accomplish what she has done.

IRITANI: Yes, well, here in Sacramento she's been active with this Ikebana, church work, and also JACL. This past year she has been President of Florin JACL which means a lot of work in making preparations to attend the National JACL Conference in San Jose which will be in August.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Now, how long has it been since you have been involved in JACL?

IRITANI: Well, I really don't know. I've got PCs [Pacific Citizen] going back to 1970s. Well, I think we both got more active after we came up here and we're retired, and I've been a member since back in 1977 because I got all the PCs from back then.



MATSUMOTO LOW: So, you, in a sense, have been affiliated, maybe not as involved, but affiliated with the JACL then back when you lived in Bakersfield and also in Seattle?

IRITANI: There was no local chapter in Bakersfield, and there was a chapter in Delano, and I helped start a chapter in Lancaster. There is a lot of Nikkei around there and there is no JACL, so I went down there several times and encouraged the people down there to organize. I think there is a Desert Chapter going on right now. But since there was no local chapter in Bakersfield, I was sending my dues in to JACL headquarters in San Francisco--my membership dues.

MATSUMOTO LOW: It may be hard to explain but I would like to hear what is it that drives you to be so involved in organizing JACL. I mean, obviously, you have a real passion and commitment.

IRITANI: Well, I think this--being involved in the community and service outside of yourself I got from JOANNE because she was busy, you know, with church and the community there, and, of course, after retirement we were both involved, but . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: A lot of people are retired and they have time and they still don't get involved.



IRITANI: Yeah, they spend most of their time on the golf course or bowling alley, but I don't know. I tried all that . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: It didn't satisfy you. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: I think that--yeah. Well, I'll get into other areas later on about some significant people in my life. Anyway . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Definitely JOANNE.

IRITANI: JOANNE. Now, where would you like to go on from there?

MATSUMOTO LOW: OK. Why don't we go ahead and move into how you were affected by Executive Order 9066. I was interested to find out about you and JOANNE, or at least you were not interned?

IRITANI: No, no, I was living in Colorado.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Where you were, what your circumstances were . . .

IRITANI: Well, I think I did mention before December 7, I was a freshman in Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado, just west of Denver, and I got my draft notice and it was "1A" and when I showed up at the Draft Board, they changed that to a "4C," and then I . . . When the Niseis were being accepted, I volunteered and ended up at Fort Snelling, the MIS language school.



MATSUMOTO LOW: My Dad was there. You might have been there probably at the same time but never knew one another.

IRITANI: Oh. I think I was more familiar with the people in the "I's"--the "H's" and "I's" and "J's". That's how they sort of put us in the barracks. Of course, in the classes I think they were put there by our ability to speak Japanese. Well, anyway, yeah, I didn't have much to do with or worry about being tentatively located since we were already out there in Colorado. However, I did recall we were farming at that time and my uncle was farming and we took on--or hired--or let evacuees work for us. Some of them lived in a small house right next to our house, and they worked for us, and we provided a room and board and I remember that. Several of the evacuees were working on our farm.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So the main reason that you were not evacuated was that you were already inland so you were not seen as a threat. So none of your family was affected then?

IRITANI: Well, I think we were all caught up in hysteria. We confiscated, of course, anything-- everything that was Japanese



- IRITANI: for fear we might be taken by the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation].
- MATSUMOTO LOW: You mean you actually destroyed some of your own property or hid that property?
- IRITANI: Yes, I think we hid them. I know our assets were frozen for a while, and we were limited in travel from home. It wasn't as severe as on the West Coast.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Did you have a five-mile radius limitation?
- IRITANI: I don't recall very much about anything like that. But anyway, as far as the discrimination there, the anti-Japanese feeling--well, it was there. The Denver Post really kept it going. But my relations--I think I continued school there for a while until army duty.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you remember how you were treated by your teachers and then by your peers at this time?
- IRITANI: Well, it was nothing out of--pretty normal. I think the people understood that I'm not a citizen of Japan--a real enemy--and just one of them, you know. I was born in this country and lived here all of my life, so it was no big deal, it seems to me.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, I just shared with you--I finished reading this book called the Broken Twig and they, I assumed from it, had grown up in Hood River when the war came along they were ostracized and people even stopped selling to them, you know, interacting with them.

IRITANI: Well, I think in some parts of the country there were strong anti-Japanese feelings, but I might point out here that GOVERNOR RALPH CARR of Colorado was the only Governor that accepted, you know, the internees from the West Coast. The Governor of Utah and others didn't even want the Japanese to come in and, nevertheless, later there was a relocation camp in Topaz, Utah. There was a camp at Amache, Colorado, which is in the south-east corner of Colorado. Because GOVERNOR CARR stood up, you know, for the Japanese and he accepted them--well, thereafter his career was--his political career-- was just shot. That was it. Right now they are working on a memorial to him by the Japanese community and the community at large showing his humanity.



MATSUMOTO LOW: His strong leadership. It's that courage to stand against the odds. Well, that's the first that I've heard of any person in a strong leadership position.

IRITANI: There is a small bust [statue] in Sakura Square which is a small Japanese community in Denver in which is located a few Japanese stores and the Tamai Towers, which is a retirement center, and also the Tri-State Buddhist Church. And besides the bust of GOVERNOR CARR I think there is one of MIN YASUI. Then most recently there is an effort to build another memorial monument to GOVERNOR CARR on the grounds--the State Capitol in Denver--on the Capitol grounds. I think BILL HOSOKAWA wrote about it in the PC. [NOTE: Dedication of GOVERNOR RALPH CARR and Amache Camp memorials was held September 18, 1996, East Lawn, State Capitol, Denver, Colorado.]

MATSUMOTO LOW: So you were able to maintain your farm or ranch . . .

IRITANI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: . . . and you had other people who were coming from maybe the States on the West Coast and living with you, not with you but near you, working there.



IRITANI: Yeah. Well, there were other evacuees working on other Nisei farms around us. All of our neighbors --my uncle had one-- several--and I think my cousin married one of the boys. That's how they got acquainted.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What about any relatives? Did you have relatives in other states that were along the West Coast?

IRITANI: No, there was just my uncle and the two girls--the cousins--and that's all the relatives we have in the United States.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So then your parents--were they there with you in Colorado, so they never had to suffer any hardships like many of the Isseis?

IRITANI: Yeah, they at least didn't have to dispose of their farm equipment and all that stuff and get uprooted and carry nothing but suitcases and go into one of the ten camps. We didn't have to go through that.

MATSUMOTO LOW: In your many travels--civic activities, you come across a lot of people who were interned. Do you see a big difference in attitude about--from people who were interned versus those who didn't have to be?



IRITANI: Yeah, well, later on I'll talk about this when I come about how the book, Ten Visits, came into being. But anyway especially in Bakersfield it's a small community, and there were some people there who were quite bitter, and they wouldn't want to talk about what went on in the camps, and then I know one family--I tried to talk to him. This man--he was sort of a community leader and, consequently, he was picked up by the FBI and sent off to one of the Federal detention camps while his family, which included three boys, and I think two were in diapers, and the mother and the kids [were] sent to camp in Poston. And the relatives and friends helped take care of this family until the family was--the father was able to get out. But I talked to this man. I wanted to do, you know, a newspaper article or write something about it. He was--didn't want to say hardly anything and . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was he an Issei or Nisei?

IRITANI: He's an Issei. The interesting thing about this family--all three of these boys--they were quite intelligent in spite of the fact that the childhood years were spent in camp. They went on to Bakersfield college and UCLA [University of California, Los



IRITANI: Angeles] dental school as well as USF [University, San Francisco] dental school and they are all dentists and working in the San Jose area as I recall.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you think it's more of an exception or more normal for people not to want to talk about it?

IRITANI: Well, here again, I'll mention this deal--how Ten Visits came into being.

MATSUMOTO LOW: This is really a perfect time to go ahead and move into that and we can come back to the other item later.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

MATSUMOTO LOW: We were talking about your's and JOANNE's book, Ten Visits, and how that book came about and some of your experiences related to that book--the writing and publication.

IRITANI: Well, JOANNE was interned in Poston which we visited and she told me about the living in Poston and there were other people--quite a few people around Bakersfield sent to Poston, and there was this one family--the man was picked up and sent to Federal detention camp, other than a regular relocation



IRITANI: center. He was quite bitter about the situation and, anyway, here is this little booklet called Personal Justice Denied, Summary and Recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. And this is-- the Commission was--let's see--I don't know who the President was at that time that ordered this Commission [PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER and one million dollars was appropriated], but, anyway, this Commission consisting of JOAN BERNSTEIN, Chair; DANIEL LUNGREN, EDWARD BROOKE, ROBERT DRINAN, ARTHUR FLEMMING, ARTHUR GOLDBERG, ISHMAIL GROMOFF, WILLIAM MARUTANI, and HUGH B. MITCHELL. These people made up this Commission and went to different parts of the country [to hold hearings] interviewing the internees and this little booklet is the outcome of it and . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: When was that published? That might give us a clue as to the President at the time.

IRITANI: It was 1983. It's edited and printed by Japanese-American Citizen League, San Francisco, 1983. But I wanted to bring out its conclusions. It says here "The promulgation of



IRITANI: Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions which followed from it -- detention, ending detention and ending exclusion -- were not driven by analysis of military conditions. The broad historical causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership." Now, this is a time that this whole redress thing was--movement was gathering momentum. I think there was only one period of time before where they did get a small redress. [Evacuation Claims Act, 1948]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was it actually money or just . . .

IRITANI: Well, they got paid one or two thousand. It was a small amount, but this was going to be a little bit more substantial and finally they were awarded \$20,000 and apology from the President. But, anyway, JOANNE and I got involved, and she as an internee and I as a non-internee, and we went around in 1987 with petitions and one petition . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: I just want to add in here that FRANK is looking at copies, so maybe the original petitions--so he's kept all the documents--petitions in process.

IRITANI: Yeah, copies.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Copies of the petitions that he went around and have signed.

IRITANI: And these were petitions--oh, here's a Petition for Support of HR 442, Non-Internees. "We, the undersigned, did not experience internment but accept the recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians and ask Congressman, the HONORABLE WILLIAM THOMAS, to support passage of HR 442." So people who signed this petition were non-internees and got all sorts of people--church people, community people--even the President of Cal State, Bakersfield.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Most but not all of these signatures then are from people in your own community locally in Bakersfield.

IRITANI: Yes. There was a group in Lancaster--a war bride's group and it was sort of group that met for Bible study and social at the Lancaster Methodist Church, and the minister came out of Los Angeles, and I got acquainted with them, and I passed this petition around to these people and they signed too. Their husbands were Caucasians who usually--most of them worked at the Air Force Base in Lancaster. But, anyway, these ladies--



IRITANI: young ladies got together at this Lancaster Methodist Church to have tea and talk in Japanese and study the Bible. OK.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So this was the beginning of the process itself, and then how did you decide where to expand to?

IRITANI: Oh, I wanted to mention this other kind of petition--Petition for Support of HR 442. This first petition was for internees, and then this other petition was for non-internees, and for the war brides that met in the Lancaster Methodist Church. These non-internees were like the President of Cal State and community people and the signers were in Palmdale and Santa Maria, Arroyo Grande, California. Here's one who gives her address as Japan and, well, most of them were around Bakersfield.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Did you and JOANNE go and speak to these people? Share with them your . . .

IRITANI: Yeah, we drove around. We went over to Lancaster. It was just a couple of hours' drive from Bakersfield, and we had home meetings, and we went over to Arroyo Grande. This is part of BILL THOMAS' 21st Congressional District. It was sort of Gerrymandered--part of Kern County and Eastern Kern County and Lancaster. There was part of Los Angeles County



IRITANI: and then Arroyo Grande, I forget what county but , anyway, it was one of these Gerrymandered areas.

MATSUMOTO LOW: When you started this process, you were already networked with other folks, you know, in other counties, or other areas, and talked about this petition process and where you hoped it would go? Or did you just start independently and with the . . .

IRITANI: Well, as I recall, we heard about the LEC, the Legislative Education Committee of JACL, were sending out instructions about getting people sort of aware that the redress is being sought, and I think most of the people were just a little bit apathetic, and so my wife and I felt that since there is no JACL around there that was doing anything for redress and we decided to do this.

MATSUMOTO LOW: And what year was this now when you started the petition?

IRITANI: These petitions are signed September of 1987. It was along in there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: And at that time there was--you said there was apathy--people just didn't want to hear about it or didn't want to take any kind of action?



IRITANI: Yeah, well, as I recall, the accounts of redress in some of the books--maybe even BILL HOSOKAWA's book, and later on, there were other books written about the redress that--Japanese people--they have to be [LAUGHTER] [INAUDIBLE] to get them to get excited about thinking about redress. Probably most of them thought that it was impossible. In fact, there is one fellow--a contractor--a Nisei contractor in Bakersfield. He graduated from West Point and he was in the construction business. I took a petition to him--he was an internee and he told me, "Well, we don't need this money. They are going--we're going--most of the people are going to spend it foolishly." and he didn't think about the apology and . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: That was the whole issue.

IRITANI: Yeah, so--well, there was a lot of--well, not a lot, but some arguments for and against redress. And I know JERRY ENOMOTO wrote an article saying that redress is really worthwhile. I got it here. . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: That was also back around 1987?

IRITANI: Yeah, here's the Los Angeles Rafu Shimpō article, August 18, 1987. "Compensation Doesn't Cheapen Redress Cause." and



- IRITANI: it's a letter to the editor by JERRY ENOMOTO, Sacramento.
- And I guess there were some people thought that the asking for monetary compensation sort of cheapens redress cause that Jerry here points out the idea that monetary payment cheapens our cause is ridiculous.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: His view was that attaching the significant monetary sum actually strengthened it?
- IRITANI: Strengthened it, yeah. That's right, so, let's see . . .
- MATSUMOTO LOW: You weren't deterred then by talking to people who felt that, you know, it was kind of silly for you to be leading up a petition drive for something that was not really important?
- IRITANI: No, I remember . . .
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Did you ever get discouraged?
- IRITANI: No, like I mentioned, there were both sides to the question of redress, and during our travels throughout this Congressional District most of the people are sympathetic and signed our petition, either the internee petition or the non-internee petition, and I remember a family in Arroyo Grande--they were strawberry farmers and they were internees, and I made a telephone call and an appointment to make a home call for



IRITANI: him--to get him to sign this petition as an internee. Then when I showed up at his door at the appointed time, well, he says, "Well, we're getting along OK here; there's no discrimination." and didn't want to sign it. So . . . [chuckles]

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's interesting. You wondered what had happened between the time they said "Yes" and when you showed up. Maybe they had spoken to somebody else.

IRITANI: Yeah. Anyway . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: So, did they sign? Or did you get by without their signature?

IRITANI: No, I walked away from their home without the signature. He didn't want to see us. Let's see, I think I have here exactly how many people signed the internee and non-internee petition here. Let's see, I have some figures here. Anyway, after we got the signatures on these petitions, we sent it to CONGRESSMAN BILL THOMAS, and he was quite against it and wouldn't sign until after PRESIDENT REAGAN indicated that he was going to sign, and then, I think, in the tally-- the final tally BILL THOMAS did sign so the petitions did some good.

MATSUMOTO LOW: It was safe--it was politically safe to do so.



IRITANI: Yes, yes. Well, he's a . . . Here's the total signers. For the internees we had--I think it says here 40, and the non-internees we had about 170 according to this slip of paper, so we had quite a few non-internees signing the petition.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: OK. Now getting back to the Ten Visits thing, I guess how that started was we were living in Bakersfield and my family and mother and brothers and sister were in Denver, so during the summer time usually we took our summer vacation and got in the car and drove from Bakersfield to Denver, and we made several trips, and on one of the trips we took the southern route and stopped by in Poston. And that's where JOANNE was. And it sort of--I guess on other trips, we took another direct east route from Bakersfield and went through Topaz which is in Utah.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You said she was in Poston. That seems, you know, understandable, because JOANNE was interned there but I'm wondering--did you, you know, actually set up a plan at the beginning as to where you wanted to visit and in what order? Was there a particular reason or . . .



IRITANI: No, it was . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: It sounds like it was initially attached to your vacation . . .

IRITANI: Yeah, vacation and this thing--going to Denver and we didn't want to go straight from Bakersfield to Denver but stopped here and there and, so like. . . . Going over that booklet called Ten Visits, we find that we visited Manzanar the first time in September 19, 1987, and then, of course, this Manzanar was on the other side of the mountains from Bakersfield, and they have a pretty established and well organized programs, and they had busloads coming out of Los Angeles, and I remember one time . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: They already had monuments at that point . . .

IRITANI: Yeah, yeah, and MICHAEL WOO-- he was a Councilman from Los Angeles and I remember he flew in by helicopter. I was quite impressed. He is a Chinese-American Councilman taking an interest in this monument and the World War II situation of the Japanese-Americans. But, anyway, we visited Manzanar in '87 and in 1992. This is a--1992 was the 50th



IRITANI: Anniversary of 9066 so there were programs--special programs going on all over the country and with all of the camps.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. Now, that was your third camp that you had visited?

IRITANI: No, it's . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was this actually the very first that you visited?

IRITANI: No, this Manzanar--I'm just going over how many times we visited Manzanar. Also in April of '94 we visited--this is the 25th Annual Manzanar Pilgrimage.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh, so . . .

IRITANI: At that time there was a [INAUDIBLE] our memorial highway marker dedicated. OK, then, let's see, our book--most of the trips were taken in 1989 so on June 29, 1989 we visited Topaz. I guess from Bakersfield, we took a more northern route to Denver and a . . . That was quite a trip way out in the Utah desert.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Before you go into Topaz, do you want to share what were your specific experiences when you went to Manzanar in '87, '92, and '94, and I know the emphasis was different, but your own personal experiences at these two?



IRITANI: Well, yes, being a non-internee I think it had more impact-- emotional reaction from my wife who was an internee, and for our kids we sort of had to explain to them what happened. I guess as I visited each of these camps, I probably realized more and more the situation with the internees and the uncertainty and humiliation and all the confusion that went on, especially with this loyalty questionnaire. They wanted you to sign "Yes, Yes" or "No, No." I think that split up a lot of families and I remember one case where--I think this Nisei girl wanted to marry an African-American and among other problems at that time this racial thing split that family and, according to this account in the book, it just separated that family and this particular person was ostracized.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You went numerous times to Manzanar so I was kind of curious. There were two major celebrations in '92 and '94 that . . .

IRITANI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: The '87 visit was strictly the one that you and JOANNE just wanted to do on your own.



IRITANI: Yes, yes, that's right. I guess that might have been the first time I visited one of these camps.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. And are the barracks--or some barracks or some replica barracks still on the site?

IRITANI: No, the only thing about Manzanar is the--it's right on a main highway and there is a guard tower--guard house and then a few miles away or about a mile away--less than walking distance--is the cemetery, and that's where they have the main gathering. I'm referring now to a photo in the Ten Visits booklet. This Manzanar pilgrimage in April 23, 1992 with the snowcapped mountain background and all the people gathered around the monument. Here's a picture of the guard house entrance from Highway 395 and there's our camp.

MATSUMOTO LOW: This is the original guard house, but . . .

IRITANI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: It's very esthetic looking in the sense that it is made of stones.

IRITANI: Yes, yes. And here's a picture of Manzanar, "I-Rei-To Cenotaph and Cemetery." There are a few graves around there but this is the main monument. Now there's a little town of Independence a few miles north of Manzanar. The location of



IRITANI: the Eastern California Museum, and there are a couple of rooms there of the Manzanar camp collection. And usually people, whenever they go there at the Pilgrimage or drop by at the camp, they also visit this little museum in California--the Eastern California Museum in Independence.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. So were there artifacts in that museum specific to that camp? Can you describe some of those?

IRITANI: Yes. Well, there's, as I recall, lot of the internees made their own furniture--chairs and desks, and there was an important substitute rubber experiment. Rubber was short during the war and they were developing synthetic rubber from a guayule plant. It think it's called the guayule plant, but there must have been some Nisei scientists there trying to develop this synthetic rubber.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I never heard of that term. Could you spell that? Guayual?

IRITANI: G-U-A-Y- U-L-E.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Is that synthetic? It's not from . . .

IRITANI: Yes, it's synthetic rubber substitute. They did later on develop synthetic rubber. But I guess this might have been one of the efforts.



MATSUMOTO LOW: And that was in the Manzanar center or was that . . .

IRITANI: Yes, it shows the different exhibits there and also the handwork--paintings and carvings, you know, by some of the people. They did--the internees did all kinds of things to keep occupied. I guess this was the first time they had time to get into hobbies or do something that they wanted to do.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. There weren't many natural resources in that area.

IRITANI: No, they scrounged around and used whatever is around there--old tree stumps or pick up rocks and polish it and. . . . Of course, with irrigation I understand they had some--quite a thriving vegetable farm. Some of the camps were raising enough vegetables to ship it to other parts--other camps.

MATSUMOTO LOW: And that's amazing if you look at the geographic characteristics of the place. It looks like desert.

IRITANI: Yes, desert--isolated--sage brush and all that.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Manzanar was your first one and then you moved on to Topaz.

IRITANI: Yes, Topaz was the next one, and we visited Topaz twice--June of 1989 and second time was June 4, 1990. This is in connection with the National JACL Convention in Salt Lake



- IRITANI: City. After the Convention was over, there were several busloads went down to Topaz which is in central Utah. We took a tour and then . . .
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Is there anything unique between the two camps--I'm sure there are more similarities, but was there anything that struck you as being distinctive between Manzanar and Topaz?
- IRITANI: Well, no, no. Let's see, there were other camps. Like Tule Lake was--seemed like a little turmoil going on there, and I've heard that Jerome and Rohwer was--the weather wasn't too extreme. It was the nicest place of all the camps. That was the place to be and . . .
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Jerome?
- IRITANI: Jerome in Arkansas--Jerome and Rowher. My wife and everybody tells me Poston was hot and dusty. Yeah, I think Topaz is pretty cold in the winter time and dusty and all that. OK, Topaz--after that, July 4, 1989--this is one of our trips to Denver --I used to visit my brother DAN and sister. Amache camp we visited twice, July 4, 1989 and then the second time was May 25, 1992 for the 50th Anniversary Pilgrimage.



MATSUMOTO LOW: It sounds like you went at least twice to almost every camp then.

IRITANI: First time was August 3, 1989 and we went by map and went to the town of Minidoka. Local people don't know anything about the camp and later found out we were 60 miles off and the camp itself was the place called Hunt, Idaho which is 60 miles to the west, so we were way off, and the second time we visited was May 26, 1990 for the--it was a dedication of some monuments and also in connection with the Idaho State Centennial. And there was quite a large crowd there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I'm a little confused on that. You said that the camp itself was actually located in Hunt, not in the town of Minidoka.

IRITANI: That's right. I don't know how it got the name of Minidoka. Maybe it is Minidoka County but we went to a place called the town of Minidoka . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: And there was nothing there?

IRITANI: Yes, people didn't know about it and we had to ask around several places and finally we wound up 60 miles west . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: In Hunt.

IRITANI: Hunt, Idaho.



MATSUMOTO LOW: What physical evidence was there there that the camps existed?

IRITANI: In Hunt?

MATSUMOTO LOW: In Hunt.

IRITANI: Yeah, there was the State Historical Society that seemed to be taking an active part, and I'm referring to our booklet, on page 25. Here's a sign on the corner of Hunt Road and Highway #25 taken August 3, 1989. It says "HUNT EXCLUDED FROM THEIR WEST COAST HOMES BY MILITARY AUTHORITIES, MORE THAN 9000 JAPANESE-AMERICANS OCCUPIED HUNT RELOCATION CAMP 4 MILES NORTH OF HERE BETWEEN 1942 & 1945." Here's a sketch map of the area. It's just between Eden and Jerome, Idaho and sort of northeast of Twin Falls, Idaho. Here's Idaho Centennial Minidoka Memorial Dedication crowd scene, and here's one of the four plaques of the Minidoka Memorial Monument. This was dedicated at the same time.

MATSUMOTO LOW: And this is all at Hunt?

IRITANI: Now the next in line was Heart Mountain which was August 4, 1989 and after that. . . . Well, Heart Mountain is distinctive because of the mountain in the background. There is this Heart



IRITANI: Mountain way in the background. After that it was Tule Lake, August 24, 1989 and this is one of the more publicized camps in turmoil. Tule Lake--some people from Sacramento went there. After the loyalty questionnaire came out, the ones that signed "Yes, Yes" were allowed to remain in their own camp, but those who signed "No, No" wanted to go back to Japan or did not want to serve the United States in the army. The more strong-willed people with strong feelings, pro-Japan feelings, were sent to Tule Lake from other camps. It became a segregation center. The stockade was there and the trouble makers were put in the stockade.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was the majority of people sent to Tule Lake then--were they men versus families?

IRITANI: Well, no, if the father wanted to go to Japan, why he had to take along his kids because he couldn't leave the kids--small ones, you know, here, and so the kids reluctantly went along with the family back to Japan and, of course, they stayed a couple of years. Some of them stayed a long time. I think a



IRITANI: quite a few of them came back again to the United States. You know, before going to Japan, or somewhere along the way, they renounced their American citizenship, stayed in Japan a couple of years, and they found out how terrible, how miserable what Japan went through during the war, and it was hard to make a living so they came back again to the United States.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you know what percentage or what number of people that went . . .

IRITANI: No, no.

MATSUMOTO LOW: . . .because a good number of people who were not--or had not signed loyalty questionnaire but wanted to remain in the United States and those were the folks that went to Tule Lake.

IRITANI: Yes. And Tule Lake was getting full so they shipped out the ones who wanted to stay here to other camps, as I recall.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was Heart Mountain also one of the camps where . . .

IRITANI: Well, there was a group there that . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: They were called dissidents?



IRITANI: Yes, Heart Mountain Draft Resisters. There was a group there that resisted the draft, and I think some of them were convicted by a Federal court and spent time in jail, as I recall.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Yes, yes. So there was segregation by action.

IRITANI: Yeah, yeah.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Hm.

IRITANI: OK. Then Poston, we visited October 25, 1989 and this is where JOANNE was interned, and we visited also in October of 1992 and this is when the monument was dedicated, and then again in November 7, 1995 when the kiosk was dedicated, and all this monument and the kiosk construction was headed by TED KOBATA, Sacramento native, who donated a lot of time and his expertise as contractor. He was quite instrumental as well as his crew that worked on that to realize this monument and kiosk, and there is also a water fountain there donated by the TAKEHARA family of Sacramento. Of all the camps, I think Poston is the most best looking at least with the monument and the kiosk and the water fountain. You don't find such a setup at any other camp.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, that's attributable to the internees who had gone there to beautify the place.

IRITANI: TED KOBATA--he is a good man working with people. Poston is situated on CRIT land, Colorado River Indian [Tribes] Territory. He got to know these tribes--American-Indian people, and he worked together really well and solicited their cooperation and they responded and, of course, we appreciated their help, because we couldn't have done much without their help. Even now there is an agreement more or less for security and maintenance. There is an Indian Fire Station right next to the monument . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Is that right?

IRITANI: . . . and they sort of look after it and maintain it and see that the water fountain is working all right. It's right on the highway there. A lot of tourists come by. Of course, the kiosk deal was to . . . We got three dispensers in there-- brochures advertising the Poston Monument and another dispenser for the Indian Tribes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Were you and JOANNE involved in the development of some of these . . .



IRITANI: Well, I think it's JOANNE that said, "Gee whiz." This is back before the whole monument deal was started. "Hey, Poston is-- there isn't much there. We'd better get something going." and contacted some of the people here in Sacramento because most of them were in Sacramento. The Sacramento committee spearheaded the project. Also, we enlisted support from groups in Los Angeles. There is a Poston group there and another group in San Diego. Poston had three camps--I, II, and III, so it was--did some doing to get all the three camps working together . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's right.

IRITANI: . . . but the main impetus was TED KOBATA and his crew, and Sacramento Poston Committee . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: I see.

IRITANI: . . . pushed it through, not only the monument but the kiosk.

MATSUMOTO LOW: But you and JOANNE were really involved in this program also.

IRITANI: Yes, sure, we were. We were living in Bakersfield, I think, at the time and came up to Sacramento several times and also went to LA to meet with the Poston people several times.



MATSUMOTO LOW: In doing this work did JOANNE then meet up with people that she had gotten acquainted with in camp? I know people were segregated in camps by blocks but did she . . .

IRITANI: Yes, every time we got together, well, she'd meet up with a classmate or somebody that were--they did things together. I think they had the Girl Scouts. I know she said that one day they asked people to get on a truck and go out and pick cotton and that lasted one day. [LAUGHTER]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Pick cotton, huh.

IRITANI: But the interesting thing was at a church meeting in Fresno where I talked about giving support to the camp redress and  
:  
whatnot and there was one fellow that came up to JOANNE and he said, "Well, I was the truck driver that drove that truck out to pick cotton.." [LAUGHTER]

MATSUMOTO LOW: To pick cotton?

IRITANI: Yes, there were interesting things like that.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Good stories.

IRITANI: Then the next. . . . Yeah, after Poston . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Did you go back there to Poston because that really was a very significant part of JOANNE's life?



IRITANI: Yes, I guess so. Let's see, the next one was Gila River and the first time I visited there was October 26, 1989. Now there are two camps there--Butte Camp and Canal Camp--and here again we just had to go by map and what people around there would tell us. Initially we only visited one camp. That was Butte Camp. But later on we found out the location of Canal Camp and this was March 18, 1995 when monuments were dedicated at Butte and Canal Camp, and there was a big program and so we visited twice.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You don't normally hear about these sub camps. You just hear about Gila River. You don't realize these were two independent camps. Were they close to one another?

IRITANI: No, they were a few miles apart. Poston--I think Camps I, II, and III were along the highway two or three miles apart. Gila River was one part of an isolated area and I think maybe a couple miles away, and along the canal there was this other camp. Now you go and there are farms all around there. And it's hard to get into Gila without a permit. And you get this permit at an Indian Craft Center along the highway. So they won't let you go in without permission.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Is that in the Bureau of Indian Affairs land? Gila River?

IRITANI: Well, there is an Indian--let me check this Gila River . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: I'm interested --you said you need to have a permit --was it a protected area or . . .

IRITANI: Yeah, there's farming and cattle around there and there is an Indian Heritage Park and Crafts Museum along the Exit 175. It's near the intersection of Interstate 10 and Highway 175. I think they go there and get this permit or. . . . There are many of the JACL people in Arizona.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: Well, this picture . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: It's a beautiful picture right here. I'm looking at a photograph of August 12.

IRITANI: Yes, the original was made in 1944. There was a wall there with the names of all those who lost their lives--the GIs. But vandals tore it down and there's nothing left but the skeleton of the semicircular . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, I see --I'm looking at the monument of a more current picture, and it looks like there are big windows, but you're



MATSUMOTO LOW: saying that those were actually vandalized then, so you had to remove . . .

IRITANI: Yes, this is the back part.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, the main wall--the front.

IRITANI: Yes, the main wall was ruined.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh!

IRITANI: So, now, it's just a skeleton and at the front is a small monument with some plaques which was dedicated the second time that we went there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Now this is at a separate site in Butte Camp?

IRITANI: This is Butte Camp.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, this is Butte Camp.

IRITANI: It's on a sort of a hill.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, Butte--it sounds like they are naming it for, you know, for topographical features.

IRITANI: It's a small camp--just a small monument there. We had a ceremony at Canal Camp first and then busses--oh, there must have been ten--twelve--fifteen busses that were in this whole deal at that dedication time.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was this also a special pilgrimage?



IRITANI: Yeah, March of 1995.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I see.

IRITANI: The first was Canal Camp. The ceremony was at the Canal Camp. As I recall, NAO TAKASUGI, the only Asian-American Assemblyman in the State of California, spoke at Canal Camp dedication ceremonies.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: Then the whole group went on to Butte Camp. The Butte monument was sort of on a top of a hill. You look all around-- the busses all lined up down there, alfalfa fields, and all that all around, and I guess the camp was all around there, you know, the original camp. You could see sage brush and slabs-- concrete slabs left over from the barracks. That's all that's left right now.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you allude in your book to or explain why there were just separate camps that were named rather than one huge camp?

IRITANI: I think it was just a matter of running the camp. People who were experienced, I think, running these army-style groups of people felt that 10 or 12,000 people at one camp and 10 or



IRITANI: 12,000 in another, instead of 40 or 50,000 in one camp, was easier to operate. That's the only way I can figure it out.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That makes sense.

IRITANI: Yes. Let's see, there were two camps. The peak camp population at both Gila River and Canal Camp was 13,348. Now I think Poston was the largest camp. Let's see here . . .

[End Tape 2, Side B]



SESSION 3, July 25, 1996

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

MATSUMOTO LOW: You were giving me some numbers. I want to make sure I've got those down. You were giving the population at Poston.

IRITANI: The peak population was 17,814. There were three camps in Poston. Now Tule Lake, it's interesting to note that the peak population was 18,789 in one camp. But, it's because there were a lot of people coming in and going out. The "No, No" people are coming in from other camps, and some were being readied to go back to Japan.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That number would make it very hard to manage even if that count was high because you're saying there was a lot of mobility so it's hard to tell exactly if that's accurate. That seems so huge.

IRITANI: Well, these figures came from. . . . I think the Pacific Citizen came out with a summary of all the camps and I think that's



IRITANI: where I got the idea of writing, starting this book on all the ten camps. They had a one-paragraph deal on each of the camps. Like Tule Lake, it opened May 27, 1941, then closed March 20, 1946, and peak population was 18,789. So among my notes I have that original PC article.

MATSUMOTO LOW: But your explanation really made sense. To have smaller camps.

IRITANI: Yes, but 18,000, [chuckles]. that's a lot of people.

MATSUMOTO LOW: All these people crammed, right, into a small area.

IRITANI: Well . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: We were at Gila River. That was camp eight.

IRITANI: Then Jerome and Rowher. Now this is in October 29, 30, and 31, my wife and I attended the National Federation of Asian United Methodists Conference in Dallas, Texas. And so it was a church meeting. While we were in Dallas we visited the Kennedy Memorial. PRESIDENT KENNEDY was assassinated in Dallas, you know.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Right, right.

IRITANI: So I think we were in our mobile home and after the church convention and after visiting the Kennedy Memorial



IRITANI:                      assassination site, we went to Arkansas which is a little further east. The date we visited Jerome was November 4, 1989.

MATSUMOTO LOW:        [Frank is thumbing through Ten Visits.] As you're looking through that I just wanted to reflect on something. I'm looking at the dates and in 1989 was an extremely busy . . .

IRITANI:                      Yes, we were busy [chuckles].

MATSUMOTO LOW:        . . . year for you. Almost every month then, you were at least at two places, sometimes three places, three camps. And then you moved through Poston, then Gila River. Just month to month. You were really covering a lot of miles in a really short time.

IRITANI:                      So, near Jerome, we had to ask around at all these places. We'd ask the natives, and people around there, "Where is the World War II Japanese relocation camp?" And lot of them didn't know. But eventually we found these camps. In Jerome we met a MR. ELLINGTON and, I think, I recall him saying he was a distant relative of JIMMY CARTER, the Ex-President. Anyway, I think his son farms that land. On the old barracks' foundations now sit hay sheds.



MATSUMOTO LOW: You mean the internment camp is being used now as farming land?

IRITANI: Yeah, yeah.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So there's no memorial or any kind of indication?

IRITANI: Later on, MARION KANEMOTO visited Jerome on one of her trips back East.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's where she was interned?

IRITANI: No, this is [just a visit]. Just a couple of years ago they had a dedication of a monument at Jerome and MARION KANEMOTO went by there and took some pictures. I don't have it in the booklet but she brought back some pictures that she had taken in Jerome.

Now at Rohwer, the JACL--I think it's the St. Louis JACL that's pretty active--working with [the preservation of] these camps. And at Rohwer, there are quite a few monuments and there was. . . . SAM YADA and his wife--I think they came from Stockton, California, and relocated after spending time in Jerome and Rohwer. Then after the war, they ended up in Little Rock and went into the nursery business. They were instrumental in building these different monuments. There are



- IRITANI: three different monuments in Rohwer. Here's one. [pointing to photographs in Ten Visits. The bottom is shaped like a tank, and . . .
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Right now, we're looking at your book on page 34 and the three obelisk-like monuments . . .
- IRITANI: . . . In Rohwer.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Go ahead. I'm sorry. I interrupted you. You were showing me that first one.
- IRITANI: Yeah, here's JOANNE [points to wife in photograph standing in front of monument].
- MATSUMOTO LOW: [LAUGHTER] I see, okay.
- IRITANI: I usually took the pictures.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Then you can see. . . . It gives you a perspective, though on how high they are because, she's about five', four" so they look like they're about 15, 18 feet tall?
- IRITANI: Yes. There were several different occasions that each of these monuments were dedicated. Mr. YADA, SAM YADA, was the main person organizing [the projects].
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Was it the same group then that dedicated all three of those monuments?



IRITANI: I don't recall until I read exactly what it says here what the three mean. Anyway, this YADA family were quite friendly people. They were very helpful. The time we visited Jerome and Rohwer, well, I called him up on the telephone and he invited us to stay at his home overnight in Little Rock. So I remember that and he told me what he had done to get all these memorials established. He's passed away now.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was his family interned at this site?

IRITANI: Yes, I know one son, maybe there are two boys, but one I think is now at Fort Smith, Arkansas, working there. The widow, MRS. YADA, I think, still lives in Little Rock.

MATSUMOTO LOW: It's interesting that you have two camps--I'm not sure how far apart they are from one another--but yet, one has several monuments and you said the other one, there was really nothing there that commemorated the internment camp itself. How much distance is there between the two?

IRITANI: Here's a sketch map. From Jerome off Highway 65 two miles, then you have to turn east on Arkansas State Highway #1 to Rohwer about 25 miles. Then get back to Little Rock, we had



IRITANI: to get back to 65 and go north up to Little Rock. I have to read the directions.

MATSUMOTO LOW: But they're really not that far apart. I don't know what the key is as far as the mileage. But just looking at it, they're really not that far apart. Do you remember how long the drive was to go between Jerome and Rohwer?

IRITANI: I guess it was about an hour.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So it's probably forty--fifty miles, unless it's a winding road. Looks like a straight-away.

IRITANI: No, no. It's all good road. State highway.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Maybe fifty miles maximum. You know, since that time--that was in 1989--do you know if anything's been erected at Jerome?

IRITANI: No, that last big program was. . . . Gee, I don't have the exact dates. But after the monument at Jerome was dedicated, MARION KANEMOTO visited Jerome and took some pictures for me. I asked her to take some pictures. She had relatives in the area there. I think they went on to Florida, as I recall, on this trip. It wasn't too much out of her way to visit Jerome.



MATSUMOTO LOW: FRANK, could you tell me a little bit about what activities are still going on relative to those two camps in Arkansas?

IRITANI: Manzanar became a National Historic Site [1992] I believe, and it's near the Death Valley National Monument. There's a group in Los Angeles headed by SUE EMBREY of the Manzanar Pilgrimage Committee, and they're working with the National Park Service. I think the first thing that they had to do was get the land transferred from the County of Los Angeles to the National Park Service, and I think that hurdle was passed. But anyway, in the local Inyo Register paper there was some opposition to what was going on. And, there was a hearing in Independence and also in Los Angeles about this whole thing. Some of the opposition failed to show up.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What was the nature of the opposition?

IRITANI: Well, I think for one thing they wanted. . . . There's a little plaque at the entrance of Manzanar near the guard house. When it was dedicated several years ago, and refers to Manzanar as a "concentration camp." I think these people, the opposition, wanted to scratch out or do away with the plaque



IRITANI: and the idea that a concentration camp was in their midst. I think that was their main argument. Anyway . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you know how that situation stands right now?

IRITANI: It's going through with these opposition letters mostly to the editor of the small town paper, Independence. It's going through. I think there are problems with funding, especially now in these times of tight budget. [Note: Rafu Shimpo article of 9-5-96, "Senator Boxer authors bill for Manzanar land swap."]

Well, there's more activity at. . . . Amache is, I think is recognized as a Colorado State Historical Site and they're working on plans to improve access, and sort of improve the Amache site itself and make it more visitor friendly. This all happened after the town of Granada, the council people. . . . Up to recently most of them were opposed. But now, we have more people who understand, sympathetic to the whole idea so they're going ahead with this improvement with the State Historical Society. [NOTE: The National Park Service placed Amache Relocation camp on the National Register of Historic Places, May 18, 1994.]



IRITANI: Now, I understand up in Heart Mountain, there are several groups who want to do something up there. And there's a local committee--I'm not too sure about the details--led by hakujin. They want to build some kind of a monument. And then, there's a Los Angeles group that wants to do something. And also, there's a couple by the name of MR. AND MRS. BLACKBURN that want. . . . I think they have a Heart Mountain Memorial Association. These three groups are trying to work out something to make improvements at Heart Mountain.

Also, at Topaz--we visited in conjunction with the 1994 National JACL convention. Plans were introduced to make a permanent Topaz Museum which included a barracks relocated from the camp site to the town. I need to refer to the book here [looking through Ten Visits]-Delta. They're going to make a museum in Delta.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Is there any reason why that town was chosen as the site for the museum?

IRITANI: Well, it's the closest town to Topaz Relocation Camp and one of the important things is that there is a teacher in Delta who is



IRITANI: very interested in the whole project and going ahead with the Topaz Museum. Let's see here [continues to scan through book].

Anyway, JANE BECKWITH, Delta High School teacher, says donations are being accepted for this \$130,000 project with Great Basin Museum and Utah Historical Society. [Reads from book] "The original barracks will be restored outwardly to resemble the 1942-45 internment living conditions as much as possible. The interior will be restored adequately enough to house various camp artifacts, photos, etc. of the internment days."

MATSUMOTO LOW: Are you keeping in contact with these people who are heading up efforts to continue to expand the camp sites?

IRITANI: I try to note in the Pacific Citizen, the Rafu Shimpo, and other newspapers what's going on.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So you continue to write and keep people updated on camp activities?

IRITANI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: OK. That's wonderful. I see in front of you a pile of books. I guess that represents the process you went through. You said



MATSUMOTO LOW: you started out with a 28-page draft, in a sense, of what you hoped Ten Visits would be and ending up with a final publication that was almost three times its size or over three times its size, original size.

IRITANI: Well, the first little booklet came out, we put it out in April of 1991 and it was just done at home on the typewriter. There's no photos in it. Just the narrative and copies out of the road map. It's sort of a crude, amateurish deal. There is no cover, except a see-through plastic cover. Then we graduated to September 1992; I had services from a blueprint company in Bakersfield, and we got a little bit better looking booklet, a few more pages, 34 pages plus a cover. And this one was 50 copies. We started to use color photos for the first time.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You also have in this second edition your little maps of the areas, the blown up maps of the areas.

IRITANI: Sketch maps, little bit more detail, yeah.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Detail, uh-huh. When you started this book, what was your hope in doing this book? What kind of goals did you set out?

IRITANI: Well, I think mainly, through our experience in visiting all the camps, these camps are just hard to find. Even the people



IRITANI: living around there gave us "bum steers" [poor directions] about half the time. And so, through our own experience of visiting all these camps, my wife and I thought it would be a good idea to write a guide book with directions how to get there. And then inserted the sketch map to be used along with the regular road map. And then a few photos we've taken of each of the camps.

MATSUMOTO LOW: In reading through--I have a copy of your Ten Visits--you also include some personal information either about individuals who were involved in the development of the site and people who were in some other way intimately involved.

IRITANI: Yeah, uh-huh. And then the next edition was in December of 1992, 75 copies were made with a supplement. While we're doing this, changes are going on in the camps, new monuments dedicated and all that sort of stuff. So, in November, 1992 we came out with [counts] "one, two, three, four." Four sheets or eight-page supplement so that was 75 copies there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I noticed the number of copies is doubling or increasing about 50 percent, in many cases 100 percent.



IRITANI: Well, I didn't know how this is being received, so every time we run out, we just make [print] another small amount.

MATSUMOTO LOW: OK. I was wondering how you decided how many to print.

IRITANI: So, the next time we're in Sacramento. And this is April 7, 1993, and . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: This is your fourth edition now?

IRITANI: We got Brownie's Blueprint Services in Sacramento to run off 100 copies.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Were there any changes then from the third revision to the fourth one here?

IRITANI: Let's see, yeah, toward the back we have several one- or two-page essays. JOANNE was an Internee so she did several pages about being an Internee--"Relocation Recollections" by JOANNE. [Reads] "One, two, three, four pages." Then I have an article here, "The Struggle for Redress," and it's one, two pages. This in general is a brief overview of how Redress started and was passed, and so forth. And then, here's a one-page article about "Resistance to Injustice" and this refers to GORDON HIRABAYASHI, FRED KOREMATSU, and MIN



IRITANI: YASUI. Not everybody said, "Yes, we'll go," after 9066 was issued, you know. These people resisted deliberately, invited arrest, and willingly, spent time in jail.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's amazing.

IRITANI: And then the next article here is "Reflections and Impressions of a Non-Internee." So, I was never in camp, but it's general summary of my impressions as we visited all these camps. And then there's a page on the Japanese Canadian experience. Somebody suggested that I include something about the Japanese Canadians. In many ways, they had a tough time, more rough time [than U. S. Internees]. They had to pay their own way into the camps and find their own places to live, and all that. They didn't get help much from their federal government.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What camps were they sent to?

IRITANI: Well, they were from Vancouver and western Canada. They were sent inland to abandoned mining camps.

MATSUMOTO LOW: None of the ten that are in your Ten Visits?



IRITANI: No, no. Well, later on JOANNE and I visited some of these places, but there isn't hardly anything there. But at that time all these Japanese Canadians were told to leave on their own. They had to leave their businesses and whatever, and just move into abandoned mining camps.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Are you interested in expanding your book and including maps and information about some of these camps?

IRITANI: It's already been done by other people. After PRESIDENT [RONALD] REAGAN signed the Civil Liberty Act of 1988 granting apology and compensation to the American internees, then evidently the Canadian Nikkei were working on their redress. So, after REAGAN signed, well the Prime Minister of Canada, BRIAN MULRONEY, signed theirs, and the Canadians got \$21,000. And this was after the American redress was signed.

And also, here's a page on Japanese Peruvians. They were a special group--Central America, and Peru.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's a story that's just beginning to come out.

IRITANI: Yeah, it's beginning to come out. Then this is my own idea through experience, my travels and the war, and college



IRITANI: courses and so forth. Here's an article "Becoming a World Citizen." Seems to me like we're living behind the times when we call ourselves "Americans" or a "citizen of Japan." I think, at least in attitude and mind, we need to think of ourselves as "world citizens," otherwise, we keep these provincial resentments and hates and narrow view about people and world conditions.

Then here's the last article, it's about human relations. I think there's a difference between "human rights" and "human relations." Human rights, people in the United States have their view of human rights. China has theirs. Basically, it comes down to human relations. [chuckles] It's a new idea I've thought about for a long time. There's such a thing as "human relations quotient." I don't know if anybody else has thought about it. You know, like the SAT, or what are some of these other exams that they give to prospective college students?

MATSUMOTO LOW: Graduate Record Exams. There are various achievement tests, I guess.

IRITANI: I think we just have trouble getting along with our fellow man, even with our own families. You know, between children and



- IRITANI: parents, between brothers, and so forth. It's a matter of human relations. Here's an article on something along that line. Here's a selected chronology of Japanese in the United States, and a short bibliography.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. You have a lot more in that book than just a travel log.
- IRITANI: Yes, well I try to tell peoples these articles in the back are more important than what's up front.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: I'll have to go back and review those. I know I read them the first time when I bought your book. I wanted to find out, now that you've finished the book and maybe it's not even in its final copy yet, is there anything else you want to add?
- IRITANI: Well, I got about a case left, but I'd like to distribute to the public libraries and school libraries and Asian American studies departments, ethnic studies, and teachers of Asian American studies and ethnic studies and high school teachers. I just issue complimentary copies to them. Because I'm not interested in making money. I'd just like to get the message out about what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II.



MATSUMOTO LOW: So you've been distributing your book to various educators in the local area. Have you gotten any kind of feedback about your book?

IRITANI: Oh, yes. Every time I give out a complimentary copy I get a letter of thanks. I've gotten acknowledgments from UCLA, Berkeley, University of Washington. When I visited my daughters back East, I gave copies to Princeton and University of Pennsylvania. I have some friends in Atlanta, and I got copies there at Georgia Tech and Emory University. So wherever there's Asian Americans and Japanese Americans, I try to deposit a copy. I don't know whether they. . . . I hope they take it seriously. I'm not connected with any university or some big publishing company.

I appreciated the help of the Japanese American Curriculum Project. FLORENCE HONGO in San Mateo helped me out in the beginning in putting a book like this together and helping with the copyrights.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Right. I know that this book is listed in their catalog, in the AACCP catalog. It would really be nice to see a little bit down the line how people who are actually working with young



MATSUMOTO LOW: folks, either college level or high school or even elementary, are able to use your book. That would be really fulfilling feedback for you to get.

Looking back on your book and its completion, is there something that happened that you didn't expect to happen or something that you learned about yourself or about your heritage that was unexpected?

IRITANI: Well, I guess Nisei. . . . It's a word that's found in Webster's dictionary. Japanese Americans seem like a unique group of people. All this effort of what I've done here, and the Japanese American National Museum, Historical Society, Japanese American National Library, and so forth. There's an effort to bring out the circumstances that led to the internment and what happened to this group of people and the contributions that they made to the history of California and the United States. And they're still studying it and people writing books about the situation.

You run across people, "What camp? What concentration camp? We never heard about Japanese Americans being put into these camps." You know there are people like that. And



IRITANI: so, Florin JACL has this Time of Remembrance programs going on. Besides that, they have projects with the school district, the Elk Grove School District, led by MARY TSUKAMOTO, where they teach the teachers about teaching their students about the camp experience and what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you see yourself as being an ambassador, in a sense, perhaps taking your book and going to the high schools or out to the community? [chuckles]

IRITANI: I'm not much of a speaker and all that sort of stuff [chuckles].  
I'll let others do it.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You sound like you have a vision, and certainly powerful ideas for teaching about the camp and helping people to understand even the whole issue beyond just the camp issue. Ideas about "human relationships" and "world citizens."

IRITANI: Well, I have some things I'd like to mention in the general areas of education and politics and religion and some of my favorite books and significant people.

MATSUMOTO LOW: OK. Good, I'm looking forward to that.



[SESSION 3, July 25, 1996]

[Tape 3, Side A, continued]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Today is Thursday, and we're here at about a quarter to ten in the morning on July 25th. Anyway, I wanted to talk to you and hear more about your work on the redress. I know earlier on you were sharing with me how you got petitions circulated, back in the '80s in Bakersfield. Then I wanted to talk a little bit more about what your work entails now related to redress as well as the various experiences you've had working with people in the process and about the different kinds of people that you encountered, and the various perspectives that you dealt with in working with these people.

So, do you want to begin talking about after the petitions, and of course all the legislation regarding redress? Where has your work taken you and led you to this point?



IRITANI: Well, we've been trying to keep up with what is going on at the various camps, particularly during February, the Time of Remembrance programs and also in May is "Asian Pacific Islander" month. During these times there's usually special programs relating to redress. I guess, one of the most important things that my wife and I have been involved in was the building, planning, and construction of the kiosk at the Poston camp, because my wife was there. There was a committee here in Sacramento that met every month and we usually participated and made plans with TED KOBATA, the construction foreman for the kiosk. That came off real well. Let's see, the kiosk was completed and dedicated in November.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was that just November of 1995?

IRITANI: Yes, that was last year on November 7, 1995. Then at the other camps, Gila River had a monument dedication [March 17-19, 1995]. We attended that too. We visited Gila River before, and at that time we could only find one camp. This time we went to the other camp which was Canal Camp, and there was a small monument dedicated at that time. There were several busses--couple dozen busses--that came for this dedication.



IRITANI: We went from the Gila Camp program to the, I mean the Canal Camp to the Butte Camp and witnessed the monument dedication there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You know, I don't know anything about the process of getting a monument erected. Can you share how that goes?

IRITANI: Well, usually there's a committee that's set up and probably a year or so ahead of time because it takes time for all these plans to gel and especially to raise the funds.

MATSUMOTO LOW: How expensive is it? Can you give me an idea about the range of these monuments that have been erected?

IRITANI: It depends upon what's going on. I mean what kind of monument is put up. The Poston monument, I'm not too sure what the budget was, but I imagine it was around fifty, sixty thousand or someplace along in there. TED KOBATA would know. Kiosk deal was a little bit smaller, maybe ten, fifteen thousand. The Gila River thing, it wasn't such a huge project. A small monument at Jerome. A small one at the Butte Camp.

Now there are other things going on that we try to keep up. Heart Mountain, I mentioned before. There are about three groups there that meet once a year or something like that.



IRITANI:

They're trying to get something going. So I'm not too sure now exactly what's going on there. But there's some interest in working on the remaining buildings around there and maybe setting up a museum or something of this sort. Now at Topaz, they relocated a barrack from the Topaz camp to the town of Delta. And they're going to set up a museum there. And the person sort of spearheading this program is a high school teacher by the name of JANE BECKWITH. She's been active for quite a few years and even now, this program is going on with fund raising and they want to collect different camp remains, icons, documents, photos and so forth. And that's still going on.

Now every year at Manzanar they have quite a substantial program. Last year it wasn't too much, but the main thing that's going on there is the tie-in with the National Park Service. Let's see, I have [looks through papers]. . . . Could you turn that off?

MATSUMOTO LOW:

Sure. I'm not aware of this national historic monument so I'd like to hear more about that.



IRITANI: Well, I have a newspaper article here from Rafu Shimpo dated July 18, 1996 which is quite recent. And it says here [reads], "The quarterly meeting of the Manzanar National Historic Site Advisory Commission is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. July 26, at the Los Angeles City Department of Water and Power." What went on is they're trying to improve the Manzanar site, and the first thing, I think, was getting the land transferred from the County of Los Angeles to the federal government. And from there, they're working on it that way. But there's been some opposition in the town of Independence, and there seems to be a group of people that objected to the plaque that's at the entrance to the Manzanar Camp. There's a plaque there with the wording of "concentration camp." And this group of people want to take down that plaque. And, of course, there are other things involved.

MATSUMOTO LOW: It's the term "concentration." That's what they object to?

IRITANI: Yes, they sort of objected to it.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What about the people who are erecting the plaque? Is there any particular reason they're choosing to use the term "concentration" because the common term is internment or



MATSUMOTO LOW: evacuation or detention? Once in a while I see the term "concentration," but I'm wondering if there's a specific reason that the group that has this plaque wants the term "concentration"?

IRITANI: Well, I think it stems back to the concentration camps of Nazi Germany where the people were put to death and treated with extreme abuse and so forth. Whereas, it was a little bit different with the Japanese Americans in these camps. It's true they were put into these camps with guard towers, and so forth. But there was no severe punishment, except their freedom. They couldn't go out as they wished or move around, however.

But anyway, in Los Angeles, next to the Japanese American National Museum, where they relocated the Heart Mountain barracks, there was a big sign there. It says something. . . . They used the words "America's Concentration Camps," and there hadn't been any strong objections to that. I think there were, but anyway, that's the reason some of these people, especially in America, didn't want to give the impression that these World War II Japanese American camps were "death camps."



MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh-huh. What do you think?

IRITANI: Well, yeah, that's right. I think the people who object are quite sensitive, maybe ultra conservative . . .

[End of Tape 3, Side A]

[No Tape 3, Side B]

[Tape 4, Side A, Missing - Copied Over]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you mind repeating that last part because I think that was an important point. You were talking about what you think a major problem in the school is now.

IRITANI: Maybe due to class size, discipline seems to be, in my mind, a big problem. The kids, I don't know how much respect they have for the teacher. Now, there's good teachers and bad teachers, and so a bad teacher will probably have a lot of problems with discipline. Of course, the class size. . . . There's too many students, it's sort of impossible to try to cope with every child's particular needs.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Class size is definitely an issue. You know [Governor] PETE WILSON's new legislation proposes to reduce class size to



MATSUMOTO LOW: twenty for first grade through third grade. But you were mentioning that in Japan, the children are very well behaved and there doesn't seem to be much of a discipline problem. Are the classes small there?

IRITANI: Well, I'm not an authority, but this is just my casual observation or reading about the school systems over there. But the students have more respect for the teacher and for the parents. I think nowadays, with American democracy, going all over the world, this is changing, and the students are beginning to lose their respect for the teachers, and so forth. Sometimes the discipline is severe. For example, in the Korean American society, they highly emphasize education, and I read of a case in Los Angeles where this Korean family. . . . The high school student came home with a grade point of 3.8 or 3.9, and the student was severely beaten because they didn't come home with a perfect 4.0 or something higher. And the case went to court. So you have cases like that. [chuckles] It's hard to believe.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, that reflects the values. What importance education is given. I'm wondering with the problems we're seeing in the



MATSUMOTO LOW: school, besides reducing class size, what do you think we could be doing with families, in particular, to help them be more productive citizens, because that really is an issue? We have children who are not embracing the same values that perhaps were central to the American culture, even a 100 years ago, and certainly the Japanese culture now where education is valued, teachers are held in high esteem. The value systems are so diverse now when children come to school. What do you think is possible to do when we have such diversity of people, and diversity of values, and those values that affect how we behave and how we act in School?

IRITANI: Well, I think the whole education system in the United States is being questioned. Frequently, we hear reports of the poor SAT scores of our students, and all the crime that's going on. Even in grade school kids are bringing guns to school. Then we hear of schools, even around here in Sacramento, when it rains, the roof leaks. The toilets don't work, things of that sort. Then there's an over emphasis on sports, football, and things like that at the expense of basic things that children need to learn while they're in school.



IRITANI:

Religion used to be a strong factor in educating a child.

Nowadays, it's like in many of our churches, especially in the mainline churches, there isn't much of a Sunday school. And it's in the churches, like the southern Baptists and conservative Christian churches where you have a larger Sunday school.

But sometimes, their religion is. . . . I wonder how they relate to other religions or get along with other people who don't believe the same way they do. It's a big problem from the Secretary of Education. I know the Republicans wanted to do away with the Secretary of Education--dismantle it. Every time a school bond issue comes up, it's voted down. And as an Asian American, I find that I can't understand this. I think, in time, this country will probably suffer in spite of the fact that our graduate schools seem to be top notch these days. But, by and large, when you test Asian students for example, and others, in math or science or even history and government, the Asian students seem to score higher. It's a big problem.

MATSUMOTO LOW:

I wish that were true across the board, because there's a huge variance in test scores among children and among ethnic groups. There are certain ethnic groups that historically have



MATSUMOTO LOW: scored low and continue to score low. I don't know what the answer is but I wanted to get back to your views on religion. When children come to school with more homogeneous values, and maybe have background in similar religious beliefs, do you think that children from those backgrounds do better in school?

IRITANI: Yeah, I think so. There's a lot of private schools or even home teaching going on, and I don't know how much religion is taught in these private schools, like the Catholic schools. But it seems like there's quite a few people who are more or less "fed up" with public education, and are sending their children to private schools, paying several thousand dollars more for tuition. Not only that, but transporting the student from where they live to maybe a religious school or high school across town. It's a lot of effort, but those things are going on.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Even the private schools that are non-sectarian, so there's absolutely no religious component that's in the curriculum. But typically, those children also do very well in terms of test scores, and also. . . . Good kids. They really are good kids.

IRITANI: I think the teacher has better relationship. I feel the class sizes are smaller. However, I'm not too sure whether these teachers



IRITANI: are accredited. You know, if they have masters in education or whatever.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, it depends upon the private school. A lot of private schools tend to hire people who have subject matter competence. So if they want somebody to teach the literature class, they'll get somebody with a masters in English literature or Asian literature. But, they also do not require a credential. But more and more private schools now are beginning to hire people who are credentialed. There's all these different factors. I know that I work in the public schools, and with the diversity in the classrooms--not the just academic diversity, but the cultural diversity, the economic diversity, the linguistic diversity--it's just amazing what the teachers are able to do. I mean there's so much bad press, but teachers do amazing things with all the limitations and challenges they have in the classroom.

IRITANI: Well, I think there are real advantages these so-called non-sectarian and private schools. Otherwise, parents would not be sending their children. I don't know. . . . Racial-wise, you know how that composition is. It might be that they're



IRITANI: selective. It seems like the people with means or with a little bit more money to spend for children's education will send them to private schools. On the other hand, to the extent that these private schools are sort of segregated where maybe the Blacks are limited or Asians are limited, the students that go there are going to suffer after they finish school and get out into the real world, so to speak. Not only that, but I don't think some of the schools have the equipment and the latest in computers and things of that sort, I'm not too sure. Education is a big business and it takes a lot of capital equipment, and the latest textbooks, and I sometimes wonder a private school being able to keep up or meet these kinds of demands.

MATSUMOTO LOW: But even small private schools, especially Catholic schools, they don't have a lot of funding. But in spite of that, their children, the students who are enrolled in that school, seem to academically do well, in spite of the lack of updated equipment and updated books.

IRITANI: Even sports. Some of those small private schools will take a championship even though they are competing with larger



IRITANI: public schools--many times larger student body size--there's something to it [chuckles].

MATSUMOTO LOW: There's a lot to it. It's a real complex issue. Before we get too far, I did want to spend a little more time on your perspectives on religion. I know you worked eleven years as a minister. We talked earlier about your work as a minister, but you didn't really get a chance to talk about your own particular views. You just shared chronologically what had happened in your career as a minister.

IRITANI: Well, you see my parents are Buddhist, and so it was after I got into the army, more or less, that I got into Christianity and along the way into seminary. I took comparative courses in religion, world religions. So, we have adherence to all these religions, and it seems like some of these religions are rather militant, and not tolerant of other religions. That's not too good for world peace or getting along. And in some cases, this prohibits. . . . Where a Catholic is prohibited from marrying a non-Catholic or a non-Jew or something of that sort. I think it's loosening up, so to speak. But anyway . . .



MATSUMOTO LOW: Can I ask you philosophically, why Christianity is more consistent with your own values? Because you made a conscious choice to take on Christianity, to embrace that, rather than following your parents' footsteps as Buddhist.

IRITANI: Well, I think Christianity appeals to a person that is sort of down and out, and where he feels sort of lonely, because the message. . . . The Bible, according to the Bible, Jesus says "Believe in me and I will save you." Like the Good Samaritan story, where a poor man is helped. And our salvation is believing in Jesus. Now the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament I find is, the New Testament, the "group" is emphasized and favored. If somebody in the group did something bad, the entire group was punished. Whereas Christianity became a little bit more "individual," and so the group didn't matter too much.

But all this is sort of changing, and I like the verse, the Golden Rule. It's Matthew, Chapter 7, Verse 12 where Jesus asks people "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." This is the Golden Rule. I first came across this in reading the life story of J. C. PENNEY, who founded the J. C.



IRITANI:

PENNEY stores. For a while I thought you had to be crooked to be a successful business man, but with J. C. PENNEY, his rule was to be honest and to treat others as you would like to be treated. So the original J. C. PENNEY stores were called "Golden Rule Stores," and he changed to the "J. C. PENNEY STORES." But anyway, it was a very inspiring book that I read by J. C. PENNEY.

So during the army I was sort of by myself, so to speak, and I got together with other Christians. So we had Bible study and all that. When I went back to University of Minnesota, after being discharged, I was baptized there in the Christian church in Minneapolis. Courses in college, I took Sociology and social work. When I was living in San Francisco, I met with some Japanese American ministers and church people, and I was looking around for something to do and they encouraged me to go into the ministry. So without giving it too much thought, I did go into the ministry and spent about eleven years in ministry through seminary and churches in Alameda, San Jose, Oxnard, then Portland. We were being moved around about every couple years, so I left and settled down in



IRITANI: Bakersfield because that was my wife's hometown and went into social work there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What were your most important contributions or what did you most benefit from when you were working as a minister?

IRITANI: Well, the greatest satisfaction, of course, was helping people to live a more religious life. In my case, to be a Christian and because of the Golden Rule, life is more than money and material things. There's a higher spiritual aspect to a full life. One thing that impressed me about Christianity was during the war, it was the Christians who were sympathetic and helped Japanese Americans while they were being rounded up and being forced into camps. JOANNE told me about an EMMA BUCKMASTER in Bakersfield and I did meet this fine Christian person. She was a member of First Methodist Church in Bakersfield, and because she was friendly with the Japanese Americans at that time--sent them Christmas presents--well, she was ostracized in her own church. So, she left her church and joined the Japanese St. Andrews United Methodist Church in Bakersfield after it was reestablished during the war.



IRITANI: Well, probably you might say a true Christian would take a stand like that. But, by and large, the average church person at that time was more taken over by the war hysteria. And that's the way things are.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I heard the Quakers came forward and supported the Japanese.

IRITANI: Yes, the Quakers, the Friends Committee. They're the ones that helped start the Nisei Commemorative Scholarship Fund where they helped the young Niseis in camp to get out and enroll in colleges back East. The group is still going and they are helping the Southeast Asian high school refugee students with scholarships so they can continue on with their education.

I was chairman of the program along with HATCH YASAMURA helping Southeast Asian students here in Sacramento. We provided fifteen scholarships, about \$500 each. After that, the group worked in among the Hmong people in Fresno and I think this past year, they worked among the Southeast Asians in San Diego.

The genesis or the beginnings begins with the teachings of Jesus where you help the down and the out and oppressed and



- IRITANI: those who need help. So for the Japanese Americans it's the real Christian people who helped them out.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Religion has been an important part of your life from the very beginning. What role is religion playing in your life now?
- IRITANI: My wife and I are both active at Sacramento Centennial United Methodist Church. It's a diverse congregation. We have Blacks and Asians on the board and among the congregation. And there's a Fiji group and their choir that adds to our service. So this is more representative of the community at large.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. Sounds very diverse.
- IRITANI: I tried to get my children to be more active, but they're busy with other things [chuckles].
- MATSUMOTO LOW: It goes back to the same issue about politics. Too busy for a church, too busy for politics, just trying to earn a living and raise their children. You were talking about how impressed you were when you read the story about J. C. PENNEY. I know that there are other people and books about people that have been very influential in your life. I notice that there's a stack there of books that are about JIMMY CARTER and his work.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Can you tell me what you gained from reading about JIMMY CARTER and finding about his personal endeavors in life?

IRITANI: JIMMY CARTER was another President of the United States, maybe not too outstanding, but I think after he left the presidency, he's done quite a bit as a mediator.

MATSUMOTO LOW: He's kind of role model for you, isn't he?

IRITANI: Yes, uh-huh. He and his wife work together and they have a lot of interests, especially in helping people. Perhaps the best example is the project called "Habitat for Humanity." He likes to do carpentry as well as fishing and other things. I got involved in the Habitat for Humanity in Bakersfield, and still interested and take an active part here in Sacramento.

This book , Everything to Gain: Making the Most of the Rest of Your Life by JIMMY and ROSALYN CARTER, is a very good book that I read. The interesting thing is that both are strong independent people. Where ROSALYN is talking it says "R" indicating the chapter or the paragraph is what she says, and under "J" it's what he's saying. So it's an interesting book where both give their different views. But anyway, they



IRITANI: emphasize service. Mr. CARTER teaches Sunday school whenever he's back home in his hometown of Plains, Georgia.

Couple years ago my wife and I attended this ethnicity conference in Atlanta and visited this--the JIMMY CARTER LIBRARY and the CARTER CENTER. This CARTER CENTER is dedicated to mediation and peace throughout the world. Also in Atlanta is the MARTIN LUTHER KING CENTER which is another influential person.

Well, some of the other books I've found very helpful was. . . . Here's a book, marked "75 cents" and is marked down to "38 cents," which I think this is one of the most important books in my library. The title is The Marks of An Educated Man by ALBERT EDWARD WIGGAM. It's gone through several printings. The latest is 1930, and some of the remarks of an educated man, it says here [reads from book], "He cultivates the open mind. He always listens to the man who knows." and things of that sort. The last chapter is [reads again], "He lives a great religious life" and points out that science and other things didn't amount to much if you don't have a great religious life. Another book . . .



MATSUMOTO LOW: According to WIGGAM then, you probably meet most of the criteria [both people laugh] for an educated man, in the truest sense?

IRITANI: Yeah, it's . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: I know you're real modest. But it definitely sounds like you do.

IRITANI: Then we mentioned J. C. PENNEY and here's a book, Fifty Years with the Golden Rule by J. C. PENNEY, A Spiritual Autobiography. And this is only \$2.75. Here he urges the practice of the Golden Rule and Christian principles in all aspects of business.

MATSUMOTO LOW: It sounds like you've embraced a lot of these principles and tenets, you know these people that you admire. Kind of looking back--you probably have many many years to go--what would you identify as your proudest accomplishments in this point of your life?

IRITANI: Well, it'd have to be getting married and raising a family, and very fortunate to have such a good wife, should I say [chuckles]. She's a school teacher [retired] so she worked well with family. I think I was sort of an "Issei type" where I didn't pay much attention to the growing up of the kids and changing



IRITANI:

diapers and getting them to school and all that. She did most of that [with much help from GRANDMA ONO]. In fact, in spite of the fact that she was busy with her own church life and community life, and work as a teacher.

I guess this idea of working for others rather than for yourself, of doing community service, I got from her. My wife was active not only in the church, but the community at large. Well, it was mostly with her Japanese church, not only with her own Methodist church, but she was a member of the Bakersfield Council of Churches, and she got the "Layman of the Year" award one time. So this idea of working, not only for yourself or within your own Japanese group, I think I learned from her working with other groups and for the community at large.

And after I retired from social work in Kern County, I became a volunteer member of Friendly Visitors Group of the County of Kern Human Assistance Program. I had two men that I visited regularly. These were shut-ins, wheel-chair cases, and I'd visit weekly or periodically and visit with them and talk to them. Sometime I took them shopping or took them to the



IRITANI:

bank or whatever. That was an enjoyable experience. Even here, I've gotten into more Asian American activities urging Asian American groups--working together a little bit more. It seems like they're quite fragmented. Maybe Korean groups in particular. . . . I can understand they've been an oppressed group run by other countries like China and Japan. Now they're trying to gain a little bit more independence and self esteem over here in this country, and I think we need to go more than half way and offer to help in any way we can. They don't have a long history here in America like the Chinese and Japanese.

I'm proud of my family. The three children we're able to get them through college. They're all married to non-Nikkei, but they're getting along and that's the best part. And we're proud of what they've done. Not only just high school and college, they've gone on to graduate school.

Probably the greatest joy in retirement right now is being able to be with the grandchildren. We've got three boys here in Sacramento and a little grandchild in Philadelphia. And I'm also proud that we have good contact and relations with my



IRITANI: sister and three brothers. They're not around here in Sacramento, but I have a brother in Honolulu and he's a retired doctor. And a brother in Seattle and he's a retired college professor and another brother and sister in Denver. I try to take an interest in what they're doing and what their children are doing. So it sort of keeps me going these days.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, you're a real modest person. You've just accomplished so many things in your life, but listening to you talk, it seems like you always give credit to somebody else. That speaks very highly of you. I'm sure that the community is richer because of you and we're really lucky to have you here.

[End Tape 4, Side A]



[SESSION 4, July 31, 1996]

[Begin Tape 4, Side B]

MATSUMOTO LOW: Good morning. This is nine o'clock on Wednesday, July 31st, on a hot day in Sacramento--another 102-degree day so it's nice to be here in the morning.

I wrote down a few of the things that you mentioned from our last session that you wanted to continue to talk about and I wanted to make sure that we touch on all these areas today.

One area was your family and your family update. It sounds like there's a little bit more you wanted to talk about your family in Japan--what you've done to keep in touch with your relatives, specifically a reunion you keep referring to. I'd like to hear more about that. Your free lance writing. There are several areas I'd want to explore there. I also wanted to find out more about your recent and current civic work. I know you're doing many things with JACL, and the conventions, and



MATSUMOTO LOW: Time of Remembrance. And I'm also interested in hearing about your many travels, your future projects, and anything else you feel is really important to include. So let's go ahead and start with the family update. I don't know if you'd like to begin with where your different family members are. We talked about this earlier, but I know that you kept referring to this reunion so I'd really like to hear more about that reunion, and how that came about, and who attended, and all the different aspects of that special event in your life.

IRITANI: Yes, we had a reunion this spring in Las Vegas, and it's the first time the family got together, our five--four boys and a sister--and also our two cousins got together in Las Vegas and spent a few days there and it was very enjoyable. Also, we had a few of the children and the grandchildren. Let's see, I had a brother from Seattle, WILLY and his wife.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What's his full name? WILLY . . .?

IRITANI: Yes, WILLY MASAO IRITANI and his wife EIKO. Let's see. His daughter, CATHERINE, and her husband, BARRY WONG, and their little girl, KELA, one and half years old,



IRITANI: were able to join us. They have two other children. BRIAN who's in Seattle yet, and then EVELYN works for the Los Angeles Times, and she's quite busy. She was not able to make it.

Then ROY came out from Honolulu. His wife has passed away. RAMONA passed away in 1989 at a young age.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was she a local individual, from Hawaii?

IRITANI: In Hawaii they're all mixed [marriage] Nikkei and Hawaiian. Their race is mixed. She was a beauty queen, I think, in Hawaii, and a nurse when ROY was interning at one of the hospitals in Honolulu. But any . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you happen to remember her maiden name?

IRITANI: RAMONA KIMURA.

MATSUMOTO LOW: She's of Japanese ancestry?

IRITANI: And also, FRANCES, my only sister. FRANCES KAWANO and her husband came out. Let's see.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Where do they live?

IRITANI: They live in Denver. A little town called Northglenn. It's north of Denver. And her son, STEVEN, came out, and her daughter DONNA, and her son JOHN who is fifteen came out.



IRITANI: STEVE and his family--his wife is JOAN and two boys, STEVIE at 14 years old and MICHAEL at 12, came out to join us. They have an older daughter SHARON and sons, TOM, GARY, and GLENN. Yes, they all live in Denver there and doing all right.

DAN--he's also from Denver and his wife, IRENE. They have two boys, ROBERT who lives in Los Angeles, and MARK is in Denver. MARK has two boys, MATTHEW, three and a half, and MEGAN. Let's see. I think that's a boy.

MATSUMOTO LOW: MEGAN?

IRITANI: It's a girl.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Girl's name. Could be a boy's name, but usually I've heard of MEGAN as a female. Have any of your children or grandchildren followed in your footsteps in terms of the level of civic work that you do?

IRITANI: Well,, no [chuckles]. I don't think so. Of course these are all retired, and WILLY helps out at Keiro nursing and retirement home in Seattle.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Your son is retired?

IRITANI: WILL?



MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, WILL. Your brother, I'm sorry.

IRITANI: WILL. He used to be a professor at Washington State. DAN goes to church and helps out with the Amache reunion. They [his Optimist Club] go out there once a year around Memorial Day to clean up the Amache Relocation Camp. ROY likes to golf all the time. He does part time consulting work for Blue Cross in Honolulu. FRANCES. . . [phone rings]

MATSUMOTO LOW: You were talking about. . . . You had moved to FRANCES, but I'm wondering if you could backtrack and tell me about ROY's training. You said he was an M. D.? What area of medicine did he go into and can you tell me about his practice?

IRITANI: Yes, and by the way, ROY was with the 100/442 and he got wounded in Italy and received a Purple Heart and all of that. He went to medical school and was able to get his education on the G. I. Bill. And then FRANCES was in the WACs [Women's Army Corps.]. Niseis were in the WACs, and she was stationed at Fort Snelling with me for awhile. And then DAN--this is later--he served in Germany for a couple of years. But anyway, ROY, after he got wounded, he was sent to a military hospital in Walla Walla, Washington, while he was



IRITANI: recovering from a foot wound. And then he went to school at the University of Colorado. Then the University of Colorado Medical School, and interned in surgery in Cincinnati and Queens Hospital in Honolulu. And that's where he met Ramona. She was a nurse there.

Anyway, he's retired now and he's doing consulting work for Blue Cross just a few hours a day.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Seems like all your siblings, including yourself, are highly educated, formally educated. It is that unusual for your generation?

IRITANI: Well, I think most Niseis were encouraged by their parents to get an education. In reading your own father's oral history, I don't know if he got a college education, but I read that his three children all got Ph.D.s, so I think most of the Issei parents encouraged their children to get an education. This even during the depression of the thirties, and that's something to be thankful to the parents. They saw to it we never missed school. Several years, I got the perfect attendance awards. But anyway

...



MATSUMOTO LOW: But it seems that even if your parents encouraged you that the economic means were not there, at the time.

IRITANI: Yes, many of the college graduates, after they got through college, they weren't able to get jobs commensurate to their education. But even then, I don't think that deterred the Niseis to get an education. Without the Issei encouragement overall, when minorities, especially Asians, when you have more or less one strike against them, in terms of anti-Asian sentiment, you have to have education to compete for jobs and raise a family, and so forth.

For one thing, education is stressed in the Asian countries. I know in Japan it's compulsory and the teachers are respected and students are really taught the basics. So it's probably a cultural matter with most Nikkei and Asian American families.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Do you think there's any lesson to be learned from maybe the Japanese belief system and way of life for contemporary American society?

IRITANI: Yes, I think one reason why Japan is more or less a world leader industrially--they got Toyotas and Seiko watches and things all over the world--that's because of the great stress on



IRITANI: science and quality of their products for which basically you need an educated work force, and of course, science and research. There's sort of a de-emphasis on education in the United States, mainly against taxes. I think in the long run it's going to be difficult. Even now parents, Nikkei parents, are looking around for adequate or good schools. They seem to be discouraged with the way the public schools are run. The class sizes are high. There's lack of discipline, there's a lot of crime. Even though they pay taxes, they seem to be willing to pay extra to send them to private schools.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I didn't mean to sidetrack you, but I think this is an important issue and I did want to hear your views on it. You want to go on if you're done talking about ROY. You mentioned that FRANCES had served in the WACs. Do you know what percentage, not exactly, but approximately what percentage of women, Japanese women, enrolled in the WACs versus the percentage of men who enrolled in the military? Was it unusual for Japanese women to enroll in the WACs?

IRITANI: It's just a handful. The only other person I know living around here in Sacramento is KIYO SATO-VIACRUCIS. I think



IRITANI: that's her name. She's a very active person in the Nikkei VFW Post. But anyway, then there were different [in different services]. Not only in the military but I think in the Navy, especially in the nursing corps. That's where they wound up besides doing clerical. She [sister FRANCES] was quite a capable person. She was active in the 4-H work and won a lot of prizes, even a trip to Chicago. And she talked about meeting TOM HARMON many years ago. He was quite a football player at the University of Michigan. But anyway, all the rest of us, the boys were able to go onto college. But she married early so . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: And she had six children. My goodness. That's an accomplishment. So she had several grandchildren. Except, let's see, GLENN. Is GLENN her youngest son?

IRITANI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: And then he's not married or doesn't have children?

IRITANI: No.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What about DAN? Would you like to talk a little bit about DAN?



IRITANI: Yes, DAN is the youngest in the family and he went to Colorado State, and ended up working for the Department of the Interior as. . . . I'm not too sure what his specialty was. I think it was doing survey work. I know he was working among the Indians in Ignacio, Colorado and with the Department of Interior in Yakima, Washington for awhile.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What was the nature of his work with the Native Americans?

IRITANI: I think it had something to do with the lands, parks and recreation area. He lived awhile in Seattle. I think his boys grew up during grade school in Seattle area.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I see. He has the youngest. He has three children that are all under the age of three and a half. I mean his three grandchildren who are all under the age of three and a half. So he must be real busy as a grandpa right now?

IRITANI: Yes, yes. His wife, IRENE, suffers from arthritis, and I think she goes swimming four, five times a week which seems to be helpful. DAN gets out and goes golfing, skiing during the wintertime.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So he's retired?

IRITANI: Oh, yes. We're all retired.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh-huh. That's wonderful. So you were able to see all your siblings then, and many of these grandchildren were able to come to your reunion in Las Vegas. Who organized the event?

IRITANI: Well, I sort of did. It was big [LAUGHTER], but it was worth it. And I'm glad that we were able to get in our cousins too because they. . . . Well, during the growing up time, we didn't have get-togethers. Lately, the time we got together was mostly at funerals, you know, when our parents passed away and when their parents passed away. But this one time, was relaxing get-together and get re-acquainted, and sort of enjoy ourselves.

MATSUMOTO LOW: How long were you actually together in Las Vegas, one day or several days?

IRITANI: No, it was three, four days. I think it would be nice to get together another time, probably in Denver, because that's where we grew up.

MATSUMOTO LOW: I guess for many of the cousins, this was actually the first time they had met each other, seen each other?

IRITANI: Yes, this was the first time for many of them. We're sort of scattered around, and, of course, Sacramento is sort of central



- IRITANI: between Seattle and Los Angeles. But out to Denver it's quite a trip. Well, we can fly, but we'll try to plan one more reunion before long.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: How long ago was this reunion?
- IRITANI: This was this spring.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, so it's very recent. It says on that family tree [looking at chart on table] 3/22/96. So it was very recent.
- IRITANI: It's in that booklet there. Yes, it was March of this year.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: I see you compiled a photo album from memories of that event. Were you able to get a picture which included everybody? Every single member at the reunion?
- IRITANI: Yes, most of them had cameras and a lot of pictures were taken.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: It's really important to be able to get together.
- IRITANI: I never heard of many of them winning on the slots [chuckles]. I think there were one or two.
- MATSUMOTO LOW: [Chuckles] That was just a side attraction--the slot machines--but the main reason is getting to spend time together and seeing one another. That's really important, those close family ties. Very important. You mentioned you had family in Japan. Are



MATSUMOTO LOW: the members of your family in Japan ever able to get together with family members here in the U. S.?

IRITANI: Well, no. I tried to get my cousin MICHIE SHIMIZU to come to America because every time we go over there, well, they treat us very royally. Her husband is retired now. The excuse she had a few years ago was she had to take care of her mother, which is my aunt who passed away in January, 1994 in the home. She didn't want to stay in a nursing home. Her mother's passed away now she's able to get away, but now she claims her health is not too good and, of course, they have a rice field to take care of so spring and the fall is a busy time for them. Wintertime, that's when the farmers have a little more time. I assume that is not a very good time to travel.

I had occasion to visit them several times, 1938 and '39, and then during the wartime, 1945 and '46. And then, I think, a couple of times since on our way to China and to Thailand when we attended conferences, we'd drop in on them. They're getting along in years. We'd probably like to visit one more time and take my cousins and my sister. I don't think they were



IRITANI:                   able to visit our relatives in Okayama yet, so this might be a good time to take them.

                              It's little bit hard communicating with them. Easiest way is by telephone. I call two or three o'clock in the morning which is six o'clock in the evening over there and I try to talk in my poor Japanese. They don't understand English very well unless I talk to one of their children. They seem to know more English.

MATSUMOTO LOW:       How is your Japanese? I assumed you were fluent because you write in Japanese and speak in Japanese.

IRITANI:                   I used to years ago but I haven't used the language or kept up so I've forgotten a lot of it. Like my wife, it's old-fashioned, old time Meiji Japanese. It seems like a lot of older Nisei go over to Japan and they start talking, and we're outdated. They don't seem to understand. [chuckles]

MATSUMOTO LOW:       How would you characterize the current language in Japan?

IRITANI:                   Well, Japanese language has changed. They've incorporated lot of English words. For example, like baseball, it's beisu-bo-ru. There is a Japanese term. It's called yakyu. But they've taken baseball and TV and . . .



MATSUMOTO LOW: Made a Japanese word that sounds similar to English.

IRITANI: It's hard to communicate with them or understand their newscasts. Then, of course, Tokyo is central, the capital. Tokyo Japanese is more or less a standard language. The further you get from Tokyo. . . . Like you go down to Kagoshima. Well, they have a Kagoshima ben or dialects and years ago, it's very difficult for them to understand Kagoshima people. Even my wife's family is Fukushima, a few miles north, and they have their peculiar dialect, so it's changed.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. That's true of every culture. There are different dialects, but you're saying it's really distinctive across different regions of Japan as far as sounding different, and really getting in the way of understanding each other?

IRITANI: Yes. Well, the American tourists, when they go, most of the railroad stations, will have the name of the station in Japanese characters as well as English. I think most of the train people, station people, as well as in the stores and travel agencies, and places like that, know some English. So American tourists can get by. In fact, I think most of the Japanese know English whereas most of the Americans, when they go to Japan, don't



IRITANI: know Japanese. In trade or government circles, you know, when they get together, it's in English.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That says a lot for their education system, but not very much for our education system. You mentioned that you've traveled in Japan mainly to see your family, but you've gone to other areas in the East. Do you want to talk a little about those travels as well as other areas that you've visited?

IRITANI: Well, the first time was in 1938 and '39 with this Kengakudan study group, mostly of junior high age, and some high school kids. There were about fifteen of us. This was under the auspices of the Buddhist church or Buddhist Institute in Tokyo. I remember the Buddhist priest coming to Denver and organizing this group [in 1938], and my cousin MARY and I were part of the group.

MATSUMOTO LOW: You mentioned you're Methodist. Are you a converted Methodist?

IRITANI: Well, this happened later on. My parents were both Konko Buddhist. Well, that was the first time I visited in Japan. Of course in '45 as a G. I., and then the next time, I went over with my brother. We attended a potato association conference.



MATSUMOTO LOW: That was your brother WILL?

IRITANI: Yes, he's supposed to be a specialist in potatoes. I went along and it was in Kunming, China--inland China. It was interesting. We tried to visit some of the schools and universities. As I recall, we didn't have too much luck. It's still under Communist influences and not very open, you know. Then I think our entire group, after that Kunming potato conference, we went up to Xian, Chengtu. We went up to Beijing and visited the Great Wall. I think it was at Xian we visited the terra-cotta soldiers. They were still excavating.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What year was that, approximately?

IRITANI: 1988.

MATSUMOTO LOW: They've brought them out since then, some of them to San Francisco, and the replicas are all over in the U. S. now.

IRITANI: Then another time, I became a member of the East-West Association in Honolulu which is a government-financed institute in Honolulu--I think it's on the campus of University of Hawaii--to promote United States and Japan trade and friendship and so forth. So I became a member of the Southern California chapter and we had a conference in Bangkok, and



IRITANI:

met a lot of interesting people there. I still correspond with a friend that lives in Chiang Mai which is a little bit north of Bangkok. I remember visiting with him after the conference up in Bangkok. Several years later he came over here [Sacramento] and I took him around to Woodland, as he is supervising tomato growing in that part of his country.

We have a motor home and we visited all the ten camps. Also, we went up to Vancouver for a Pan Nikkei conference where the Japanese from the United States, Canada, Central America, South American countries got together and that was an interesting conference. If you know Japanese, you're sort of able to communicate with the ones from Peru or South America. Otherwise, they spoke Portuguese, no English [chuckles]. That was an interesting experience.

Now, I've joined the Asian American Studies Association. I think the status of Asian American studies in our universities is terribly weak. It needs to be upgraded. I attended one conference in Philadelphia. That's where my daughter is and I met a lot of people there. That time we heard students holding hunger strikes. I think it was Northwestern University where



IRITANI: the students held a hunger strike. They wanted more Asian American studies classes, and faculty and tenure for the faculty. I think there was a sit-in demonstration at Princeton. There was a group of people that came from Princeton.

I take Asian Week and a few other papers like that. Periodically, they report of student demonstrations at Stanford and UC Irvine, Berkeley, where there's high number of Asian American students having demonstrations and so forth to try to upgrade Asian studies and increase faculty.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What is your involvement, if any right now, in working with people who are interested in promoting Asian American studies?

IRITANI: Well, I try to keep in close contact [with] Asian American studies as well as Asian studies at our local Cal State, Sacramento, and UC. Davis. Seems like the strongest is Asian Studies at both of these schools. I'm a member of Citizens Advisory Committee on Asian Studies at Cal State, Sacramento, and we meet regularly.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Who's involved in that committee from the university as well as from the community?



IRITANI: A few years ago, JUDGE CHARLES KOBAYASHI was chair of that group, and people like TOKO FUJII and a few of the Nikkei community were members. Now, they sort of dropped out. I'm about the only Nikkei there. Now, there's a few Chinese and Asian Indians, and the head of the whole program is LEWIS ROBINSON--DR. ROBINSON. He is a teacher of Chinese languages, and he seems pretty capable and people like him are sort of carrying on. It seems a little bit hard to understand. DR. HAYASHIGATANI. . . . I guess, let's see, what was his . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: He's on sabbatical right now. I think he's in Japan.

IRITANI: Oh, on sabbatical. Well, it seems like people like that would take more interest. Maybe they're more interested in Asian American studies rather than Asian studies. You know, there's a distinction there.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh.

IRITANI: I think the same way at UC Davis when GEORGE KAGIWADA retired, they lost their director for Asian American Studies Center. But I understand that lately they hired a STANLEY SUE, a pretty well respected Asian



IRITANI: American psychologist from UCLA. . . . He's coming to Davis this fall to head the Asian American Studies Center. I haven't met him yet.

There's a new professor there, DARYL HAMAMOTO, and he's with Asian American Studies. But part of his family is down there, I think, at UC Fullerton, and his wife is there and his children go to school there. Unless his wife can get a job up here at Davis--well, he's up here by himself.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Is she also an academician?

IRITANI: She works in one of those departments down there. She has a job. I don't know exactly what kind of work it is.

MATSUMOTO LOW: What seems to be the main obstacle to the growth or even the maintenance of Asian Studies?

IRITANI: Well, an example of UC Berkeley and CHANCELLOR TIEN. . . . I think if you have good leadership, especially the president and the chancellor promoting and showing strong interest in Asian American studies. We're not getting very far. Of course, CHANCELLOR TIEN just resigned recently, and he was instrumental in getting millions of dollars from Taiwanese people to donate to UC Berkeley, to promote Asian



IRITANI: studies. If we can get Asian Americans to donate a few million dollars to Cal State, Sacramento, and UC Davis, I think it'd be a great thing.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So it goes back to funding is what you're saying, but also leadership is lacking?

IRITANI: Yes, leadership.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Your involvement in the Asian Studies project is kind of separate from other civic work you're doing right now. I know that you're involved in the Japanese American Collections. Also the Florin JACL. What are some of the projects you are currently working on?

IRITANI: One of the main ones is this oral history. I think MARION KANEMOTO has been directing it for several years, and she'd like to relinquish the job so we're trying to find somebody within Cal State to keep it going. Another is the archival collections. Course, the bottom line here is funding. MARY TSUKAMOTO is getting along in years and we don't know how long JACL is going to be carrying on, but we feel that Cal State, Sacramento, is going to be here for a long, long time. So



IRITANI: we just want to keep the tie-in strong and permanent as long as we can.

The last few meetings of this Japanese American Collections Archival group's been talking about where the archives is situated. Now, we might be bumped. They'd like to expand into the South Reading Room, but I think the student union wants to expand, so it seems to be up in the air as to where the archives can expand. GEORGIANA WHITE, the archivist, curator, has stacks of stuff in the back there that needs to be gone through. But it keeps piling up.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Uh huh. Not enough people to do the work. I know that JOANNE, your wife, has been going almost every day to do volunteer work with the archivist.

IRITANI: We have an interesting program coming up next year. I'm not too sure if it's the fiftieth anniversary of Cal State, Sacramento, but I know with the archives group. . . . GWEN [WITSAMAN], I think she's campaign chairman, she's had contacts with IRENE HIRANO, Director of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. Also, LEONARD VALDEZ, who's the head of the Multicultural



IRITANI: Center at Cal State, we're all trying to get together to put on a program for this CSUS fiftieth anniversary thing next year.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Are you on that committee also?

IRITANI: Well, our archival committee is working together and we're planning for some kind of big exhibit. This would be a good time to get the word out and promote fund raising. I think our goal for the archives is \$100,000, and we have about \$75--\$80,000. But that's the minimum.

MATSUMOTO LOW: But we have much greater hopes. Are you kind of promoting these--a lot of these projects through your free lance writing because I know that you write to a lot of community publications or Nikkei publications?

IRITANI: Yes, whenever I have a chance I try to promote these things. Well, anyway right now this JACL convention is coming up in early August, and GEORGIANA WHITE is going to have an exhibit there. I want to borrow my son's van and haul some of the Japanese American exhibits down to the conference. However, I'm involved in something else which is the National Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Campaign booth. So I'm going to be busy with both things.



MATSUMOTO LOW: Both projects. What about your writing? You had mentioned to me that you had written for various newspapers, Japanese newspapers? Can you tell me when you started writing, and the genesis of your interest?

IRITANI: Back in Bakersfield, after I retired I feel that I'm just not very good at public speaking, so I try to get across my ideas through the printed page. My wife and I started KAPA, Kern Asian Pacific American news, and it went on for a couple of years until we moved up here. But it was a monthly.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Were you the sole publishers and distributors of this KAPA?

IRITANI: Yes.

MATSUMOTO LOW: This is back in 1986?

IRITANI: Yes, before we moved up here to Sacramento. And also, I wrote some articles for such papers as the Rafu Shimpo in Los Angeles, and Asian Week of San Francisco. And Asian Week would send me a few dollars for each article that I sent in.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That was helpful then to get a little bit of compensation? But that's not the main reason you were writing.

IRITANI: No. I told them they didn't have to pay me. But anyway, I wrote some articles for Pacific Citizen [the JACL periodical].



IRITANI:

Here's one dated May 31, 1988 about the future of the JACL.

There are about four things: redress follow-up, human relations action, meaningful retirement, and funding. I thought at that time in 1988, that was sort of the main problems of the JACL. I think these are still the main problems.

Here's another one "Becoming World Citizens." This is in the area of human relations. But anyway, this was incorporated in the book called Ten Visits that we put out. Here's another article. I don't think I submitted this for publication but this is called "Asians in the Struggle." This is about our trip to Washington, D. C. and Philadelphia, and visiting the Smithsonian, and attending congressional Medicaid hearing, and impressions of the Washington monument, meeting LON HATAMIYA. He's a local person. He's an Administrator with the Agricultural Marketing Service in the Department of Agriculture. He was a candidate for California Assembly. I talked about a visit with BONITA in Philadelphia. Philadelphia's where I attended this Fifth Annual East of California Conference of the Association for Asian American Studies, and met with people like DR. FRANKLIN ODO and



IRITANI: GEORGE TAKEI and heard about the panel of the five students from Princeton University and their sit-in strike. And also a panel from Northwestern and their hunger strike.

MATSUMOTO LOW: This is an article you wrote, but has not been submitted for publication. This is just something that you felt was important to get done?

IRITANI: Yes. Well, here's a short article, "Sushi and Me." This is in connection with the 1995 Pacific Rim Fest and they put out a program. One of the directors asked me to write something on sushi.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Now where does this appear, this sushi article?

IRITANI: In the program.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Oh, I see.

IRITANI: I think sushi is a part of being Nikkei. . . . I think that rice was a theme for that year. So this is an article on sushi and I guess all Japanese families remember sushi or like sushi. My final sentence was "To enjoy sushi is to better understand Japanese and Asian People."

Here's another article. This was in Rafu Shimpo dated January 16, 1995, "Battle Lost, War to be Won." This was



IRITANI: about the elections. In many ways, we lost--Asian Americans lost--the election so to speak, but the war to be won is the many challenges that we face like recently, affirmative action deal seems to be pretty heated issue.

MATSUMOTO LOW: Are you optimistic about this "war"?

IRITANI: Oh, yes. When the Republicans won in '94, they came out with "Contract with America." In the last couple years, I think it's sort of gone downhill and general consensus is that this "Contract with America" hurts Asian Americans.

Here's another one, "Asian Americans in the November Elections" came out in Hokkubei Mainichi October 26, 1994. Now this latest one is called "Why Vote," and it's about five pages. Currents, a local periodical that comes out about every quarter, asked me to write something on voting so this is the latest article on why Asians . . .

MATSUMOTO LOW: Was that the last issue of Currents?

IRITANI: Yes, I just sent this in. I don't know. I sent it in to Currents and Rafu Shimpo and Asian Week.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So maybe it'll come out before, just before the elections?



IRITANI: Well, I hope it comes out next week or so. I'm involved with this National Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Campaign and it takes some doing here [chuckles].

MATSUMOTO LOW: Well, you write about so many topics, but clearly there's a real strong passion that you have about political leadership and the need for civic involvement. I think that really captures your life. Where do you see yourself going in terms of any further projects? I know you're very heavily involved in certain activities that you've already shared today and in past sessions. Are there future projects that you feel you will continue to embrace and support?

IRITANI: I'd like to keep active in the JACL, but I'd like to see the younger people taking over the main job. I'd like to try and support them and try to give them what I've learned through experience, "of my some 60-70 years of living." I know the young people have the enthusiasm, and the technology. But it takes some of these seasoned ideas to sort out what is important and what is not important in the long run.

Well, I think one of the main projects right now is the follow-up on our family reunion and put together some kind of



IRITANI: family history, collection of photographs. I've got something here that my sister gave me that she had at our reunion. Here's some Japanese certificates or Japanese bonds. My dad had it from pre-war. They might be worth something. I guess I'd better check it out. Here's another document showing our registration of our family members back in our hometown of Okayama. It's in Japanese and it gives the name of my father, and birthdate, and mother and all the children and so forth. It seems like before the war, whenever there was a birth in the Japanese family, it was reported back to the office of the hometown to be recorded. I don't know whether that's continued today or not. And also before the war, there was something called dual citizenship. I think that's sort of frowned on now.

MATSUMOTO LOW: When do you hope to have this book, collection, put together?

IRITANI: After a few of these oral histories I'm involved in and so, as soon as I get that done, maybe I'll get to it.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That would be a wonderful legacy for your family.

IRITANI: And also, I'd like to spend some time with my grandchildren. Got two boys, six and four, DANIEL and KEVIN. And with a



IRITANI: new baby, JACOB, that was just born. LESLEY, our daughter-in-law, is sort of busy, we're trying to help her and get the boys out to the parks. KEVIN is enrolled in kind of a pre-school and DANIEL is going to a baseball camp in Land Park.

MATSUMOTO LOW: So that will keep them somewhat occupied.

IRITANI: This week, I'm trying to get the motor home out and go camping. Like to do some trout fishing again, but I think the boys are a little bit too young right now, so I think we'll just go out camping and go up in the mountains where it's a little cooler.

MATSUMOTO LOW: That's wonderful that they can have that experience, and that you can spend the time with them. In closing, is there anything else you'd like to say? I know we've covered such a huge range of topics and area, I'm sure we still have not fully explored your history and those things that are important to you. But is there anything in closing that you'd like to add?

IRITANI: Well, I'd like to thank the Oral History Program, Florin JACL and Cal State, for giving me the opportunity to participate in the project. Isseis are almost gone and Niseis are in their 70's and 80's, so this is really a good time to try to get their



IRITANI:

experiences--something to pass on to our children and the community at large.

Well, I think one of the things that I'm really concerned with is my health. I seem to be going to the doctor more often. You know, an interesting thing about my parents. I don't even remember my father going to a doctor and I know my mother went a couple times. But, anyway, right now we seem to be more health conscious and watching our cholesterol and sodium intake and getting exercise. I don't know if our parents had to worry about those or not [chuckles]. Just lately the doctor told me to do a little exercise every day.

MATSUMOTO LOW:

Well, we hope you do take care of yourself. I really appreciate the opportunity to interview you, and I also want to thank the Oral History Project.

[End Tape 4, Side B]



## NAMES LIST

Florin Japanese American Citizens League  
Oral History Project

INTERVIEWEE..... Frank Iritani

INTERVIEWER..... Janie Matsumoto Low

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Daniel Lungren	Member, CWRIC	National JACL	84
Edward Brooke	Member, CWRIC	National JACL	84
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Arthur Flemming	Member, CWRIC	National JACL	84
Arthur Goldberg	Member, CWRIC	National JACL	84
Ishmail Gromoff	Member, CWRIC	National JACL	84
William Marutani	Member, CWRIC	National JACL	84
Hugh B. Mitchell	Member, CWRIC	National JACL	84

\*Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians



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## IRITANI FAMILY TREE IN U.S.

**FRANK SAICHI IRITANI (1885-1955)**  
arrived in San Francisco from Okayama-1906

**Chitose Shimizu (1896-1989)**  
arrived in Seattle-1919

FRANK - Joanne Ono

Susanna - Richard Minard

Ken - Lesley Lumsden

Daniel - 5

Kevin - 3

Bonita - Jon Hussey

Marisa - 4

WILLY - Eiko Totoki

Evelyn - Roger Ainsley

Sharra - 14

Nicholas - 9

Katherine - Barry Wong

Kela - 1 1/2

Brian

FRANCES - Don Kawano

Sharon - Joe Jiron

Joe, Jr. - 24

Donald - 22

Tom

Steve - Joan Heifner

Stevie - 14

Michael - 12

Gary - Michelle Bellevielle

Donna

John Hutcheson - 15

Glenn

ROY - (Ramona Kimura 1928-1989)

Roy, Jr.

David

Stuart - Wendy

DAN - Irene Mayeda

Robert - Sue

Amanda - 9 mo.

Mark - Patra

Matthew - 3 1/2

Megan - 17 mo.



## IRITANI FAMILY TREE IN U.S.

**JOE HEIKURO IRITANI (1890 - 1972)**  
arrived in US via Mexico from Okayama-1908

**Shikano Morikawa (1898 - 1984 )**  
arrived in Seattle as picture bride - 1917

BEEY - (Bob) Kawakami ( 1918-1992)

Carolyn - Roy Hashiro

Kevin

Michael

Traci

Shirley - Don Tsuchimoto

Mia - Toney Kim

Scott - 10 (great grandchild)

Daniel - 2 (great grandchild)

Gregg - Brandi

Kenji

Douglas

Breanna - 5

Lois - Dave Reitz

Jason - 17

Kelly - 15

Alan - Pam Mills

Jonathan - 6

Stephan - 5

MARY - (Harry) Ida (1917 - 1994)

Richard - D.J. Kato

David - 23

Ronald

Janet - Paul Sasa

Leslie - 16

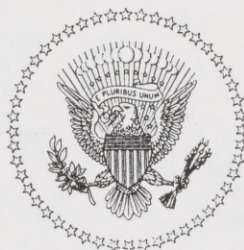
Robert - Gail Yamashita

Jeffrey - 12

Kathryn - 9

Jonathan - 8





FRANK M. IRITANI

*To you who answered the call of your country and served in its Armed Forces to bring about the total defeat of the enemy, I extend the heartfelt thanks of a grateful Nation. As one of the Nation's finest, you undertook the most severe task one can be called upon to perform. Because you demonstrated the fortitude, resourcefulness and calm judgment necessary to carry out that task, we now look to you for leadership and example in further exalting our country in peace.*

*Harry Truman*

THE WHITE HOUSE



## HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN RELATIONS

Civil and human rights is an age old problem and the source of much social unrest in practically every country in the world--from the backward primitive to the most advanced and industrialized nation. There has been much research done and written about the historical and current situation but it seems there is very little in the way of suggestions and solutions particularly in terms of being "doers" and following through with what we say and profess.

Past emphases has been black vs. white; majority vs. minority and the usual goal was to be "Americanized" and be assimilated into a "melting pot". Now, in addition, Blacks are fighting Blacks; Hispanic gangs are warring with other Hispanic gangs. To go a step further, in some families (regardless of color) there are parent-child; brother-sister relationships which are tense and estranged.

America is purported to be a land of opportunity and freedom. This my home. I was born here. But we are not handling our opportunities and freedom very well. Some immigrants come into the U. S. bringing "excess baggage"--old stereotypes and prejudices of past history. We like to say, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" but our actions and behavior are too often to the contrary.

It seems we need to adjust from the "melting pot" thinking to the "salad bowl" idea where cultural identity is accepted and different foods, languages, religions, and customs are recognized. In other words, in this scientific, computer age, the urgent need is to learn to live together--compete less greedily and work more harmoniously together.

Heretofore, human rights and civil rights were sought after the fact--after an incident, a killing or a riot. The usual civil rights approach is still needed and redress sought if there is a violation. The basic, long term need for these times of changing, diverse populations is education, preparation and prevention for a more harmonious human relationships so we may work and live with less tension, increased sensitivity and be more comfortable in one another's presence.

Frank Iritani April 9, 1991



PETITION FOR SUPPORT OF H. R. 442 - Non Internee

We the undersigned did not experience Internment but accept the recommendations of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians and ask our Congressman the Honorable William Thomas to support passage of H. R. 442.

Date	Name	Address
Aug 8, 1987	Berta Neville Ehrhardt	3010 Harmony Drive Bakersfield, Ca. 93306
Aug 8, 1987	William T. Ehrhardt (Pastor - Northridge Presb.)	3010 Harmony Drive Bakersfield CA 93306
August 8, 1987	Sandra Matsui Nishimori	3500 AKers #25 Bakersfield, Calif 93309
August 11, 1987	Vernon L Lowe (Neph U.S. Marine)	208 Bermuda St. Bakersfield CA 93309
Aug 11, 1987	Flourence M. Christie	1301 New Stone Rd #909 Bakersfield 93309
Aug 11, 1987	Joseph F Briggs (Former Asst. Director, Welfare Dept.)	901 Day Ave Bakersfield, Ca. 93308
Aug 15, 1987	Kenneth C. Seer (Vice Pres. CSB)	5901 Poco Ct. Bakersfield, Ca. 93309
8-15-87	Dale Lee (Rice Bowl co-owner)	1908 Glenmont Dr. Bakersfield, Ca. 93309
8/15/87	Dorothy Lee (Rice Bowl)	1908 Glenmont Dr. Bakersfield, Ca. 93309
8/15/87	David R. Provencio (Business Man)	2012 Westbrook Dr Bakersfield Ca. 93309
8/15/87	Pauline B. Provencio (Sales Clerk)	2012 Westbrook Dr Bakersfield, Ca. 93309
8/16/87	Timothy R. Torgio MD (President, Family Practice Kern Medical Center)	3815 2815 Columbus St #14 Bakersfield, Calif. 93306
8-16-87	Leta Fuentes	5100 College Ave Bakersfield, CA 93306



## VOICES

# Battle Lost, War To Be Won

By Frank Iritani

*Frank Iritani, public relations and human relations chair for the Florin, Calif., chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, is a retired activist.*

**HUMAN NATURE**—There is a need for sanity, sober thinking and perspective after the recent elections. We all like to be winners. But as Charles Darwin put it succinctly many years ago, "Life is survival of the fittest." Sometimes when I despair of TV news, I turn to nature, plant and animal programs and about conservation and survival. An interesting facet is how the weak and smaller adjust and cope to survive by various protective covering and color adaptations, staying motionless and generally trying to outwit a larger, more aggressive foe.

In addition to survival, people must accept and adjust to constant change. For some reason, change is uncomfortable, produces uncertainty, and we resist. But like a comfortable, well-worn shoe, periodic replacement is necessary. We are most comfortable with those most like us and whom we know. These days, we meet up with all sorts of people—in the neighborhood, on the street and in our workplace. Unless we make an effort to adjust and cope, xenophobia sets in, followed by some kind of tragedy. Another too common trait is that people tend to complain and scapegoat when facing fear, tension and decisions.

More basic than these human relationships is the functioning of the self, self-worth, wholeness and integrity of the person. Pundits state present-day politics has made lying respectable, led by a former president. Where is conscience when an elected official refuses to resign or step down when indicted for lying to Congress or committing campaign fraud?

**THE ELECTION IN GENERAL**—I have been a registered voter all my adult life, and I have never experienced a more negative, mean-spirited campaign. The winners have not much to be proud of. The American image has diminished in the eyes of the world, and in the heart of every thoughtful American.

There is no clear mandate, the people have not spoken, contrary to some news headlines. Various polls indicate whites have exposed their feelings and fears, as it is this group whose votes really counted. An Associated Press exit poll indicated the following ethnic breakdown of those who voted for Prop. 187: Whites-73 percent, Latino-12 percent, Asian American-4 percent, African American-9 percent, and other-1 percent (Sacramento Bee, Nov. 13, 1994). Also, many non-whites are not registered and/or have failed to vote. Los Angeles Police Chief Willie Williams was asked about the possibility of another riot. He replied, "We are prepared."

Most are angry and "fed up." We are led to believe in "the will of the majority" as the democratic way. Peter Drucker in his book, "The New Realities," has a timely discussion, "The Tyranny of the Small Minority," by which a small pressure group tries to control. They are committed to a single cause such as "less government." They tolerate no compromise and freely use such tactics as the filibuster to thwart and obstruct. The focus of lawmaking shifts from elected representatives to lobbyists; paralysis and gridlock sets in. Some type of term limits, legislative and campaign reform are sorely needed.

The popular rhetoric about welfare reform is "lazy people not wanting to work." Real welfare reform needs to include low wages, inhumane working conditions, social injustice, gender and racial discrimination and farm subsidies.

Other areas, such as housing and urban development, health care, mental health, civil rights, women and children issues, may be neglected or even set back. Regarding crime and violence, the main emphasis will continue to be more prisons and punishment, rather than basic causes and prevention.

**ELECTIONS AND ASIAN AMERICANS**—A large number of Asian American candidates (all Chinese Americans this time) is a welcome sight, says Patrick Andersen (San Francisco area analysis in Asian Week, Nov. 18). Asian Americans do not vote as a block—politically and racially. He further notes that voter turnout was abysmal in neighborhoods with high concentrations of Asian Americans, furthering the stereotype that Asian Americans do not get involved.

Various articles in the Northwest Asian Weekly (Seattle) indicate Asian Americans in the Pacific Northwest are active politically and community-wise. They do more than just talk about such serious Asian American issues as education, domestic violence, status of women, AIDS, new immigrants, etc.

Nationally, Japanese Americans have the spotlight, but for how long? Asian America and all of America can be proud of Senators Dan Inouye and Dan Akaka (re-elected) and re-elected Congress members Norman Mineta, Patsy Mink and Robert Matsui. Also, Korean American Jay Kim was re-elected. Both senators are from Hawaii, as is Mink. The others are from California. All are Democrats except Kim.

**NOW WHAT?** Asian Americans are a fast-growing group and may be larger than Hispanics and African Americans in some localities. It seems more citizen participation and candidate development are needed for adequate representation in all levels of government. Long-range planning and organization should start soon. Some battles were lost, but the war is still to be won.

Coalitions, or all Asian Americans working together, could make a significant impact, but this is too much to hope for at present. Most have divisions within, and there is very little inclination to work together. Passiveness ("enryo syndrome"), cultural and language differences are additional formidable obstacles.

Economic inequality and the growing gap between the rich and the poor need attention (The Economist, Nov. 5, 1994). In relatively unregulated economies, incomes are driven down for the poor and driven up for the wealthy. A connection is pointed out between economic inequality on the one hand, and crime, poor health and other social problems on the other. These need to be faced and dealt with on the basis of fairness.

It seems many immigrants and the recently arrived are not naturalized citizens. Educators and Immigration and Naturalization Services officials anticipate a surge in citizenship class enrollments. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, average annual enrollment is expected to swell from 500 to 25,000 in a few months for adult citizenship, English and literacy classes, mostly from Hispanics, but a sizable number from Asian and other groups is expected. Ninety thousand are expected for naturalization the coming year. Hopefully, this will discourage, to some extent, anti-immigrant and anti-Asian sentiment. ■





# California State College, Bakersfield

Office of the Dean

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (805) 833-2219

9001 Stockdale Highway  
Bakersfield, CA 93311-1099

May 31, 1985

Ms. Taeko Joanne Iritani  
3401 Oro Vista Avenue  
Bakersfield, CA 93309

Dear Ms. Iritani:

I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the faculty in the School of Education that you have been named the Outstanding Graduate Student for 1985 in the Special Education concentration of the M.A. degree in Education.

We will honor the Outstanding Graduates in Education at the CSB Honors Banquet which will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 5 at the Red Lion Inn. You will shortly receive more information about this event from the CSB Public Affairs Office.

We will look forward to seeing you at the Banquet and at Commencement, where your name will appear in the Commencement program as a special honoree.

Congratulations!

Sincerely,

Deborah Osen Hancock  
Dean

DOH:lw  
cc: June Webb



★ CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION ★

# Japanese American Citizens League

## Legislative Education Committee

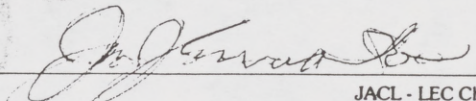
honors

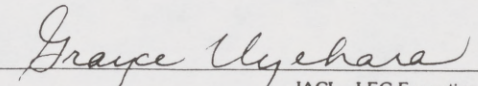
# Frank Iritani

for Commitment to Liberty and Justice  
and for the Outstanding Support to  
the Redress for Americans of Japanese ancestry.

August 7, 1988



  
JACL - LEC Chair

  
JACL - LEC Executive Director





**A Volunteer for Friendly Visitor Program, Department of Human Services, County of Kern**

Iritani, a retired social worker, currently visits two gentlemen he considers his very good friends. Both are confined to wheelchairs.

"I started out with just one fellow and picked up the other one later," he said. "The younger guy is Japanese so we have our culture in common. I drop in every so often and see how he's doing."

Iritani said sometimes he'll take one or the other to the bank or out shopping, loading their wheelchairs in his trunk. Other times they'll sit and quietly talk about favorite topics, such as sports. Recently Iritani took a toolbox along on a visit and fixed a loose toilet seat and every so often he comes to visit loaded down with excess fruit from his backyard.

However, Iritani said no matter what he does, he always gets back more in return.

"I've really enjoyed getting to know these two gentlemen" he said. "Nile (Page) is very interesting. He's a collector and his apartment is crammed full of all kinds of things. He has a stamp and coin collection and plates from all over the United States."

Over the years, Iritani has built some wooden frames to hold the treasured keepsakes.

"I like to do carpentry work, so I offered," he said. "I think a lot of people need something like this in their lives. Even if they have family around, there's nothing better than having a friend."



**Bakersfield Californian**  
February 20, 1991

Friendly Visitor Frank Iritani chats with Nile Page at the latter's collectible-filled apartment

**Volunteers offer cheerful voice, smiling face to lonely**



Saturday, Oct. 22, 1994

## Asian Americans and the November Elections

By FRANK IRITANI

"Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but his inclination for injustice and abuse makes democracy necessary."

— Jimmy Carter

When Election Day comes, what are Asian Americans going to do?

According to the 1990 census, they comprise about 3 percent of the total U.S. population, 10 percent of California and 10.7 percent of Los Angeles County. Less than 25 percent are registered to vote, and fewer may actually make the effort to get out and cast their ballot.

There is so much cynicism about politicians and anger about "the system" that most Americans will probably go about business as usual and not bother to exercise the right of citizenship.

The obstructionist tactics of "stop it, kill it, delay it, amend it, talk it to death" are a clear abuse of representative government and the democratic process. More initiatives appear on the ballot as elected representatives are not trusted. "What is going on in this country?" asks public opinion analyst Lou Harris.

Whenever Sen. Daniel Inouye, the late Sen. Spark Matsunaga, and Reps. Norman Mineta and Robert Matsui spoke to Asian American groups, they always stressed voting and citizen participation.

The front page of the recent special election issue of the Northwest Asian Weekly (Seattle) had photos of 13 Asian candidates running for local and Washington state offices. This is a healthy sign of progress, even though confined to one state.

The JACL, Organization of Chinese Americans and other national Asian American groups need a broad, inclusive focus such as "Citizenship 2000." The pressing need is for candidate development, coalitions, voter registration and greater citizen involvement.

The California ballot is long and many initiatives are too often misleading. Really, the voter should spend time to study it and ascertain who the sponsors and endorsing organizations are of the various propositions.

If possible, obtain informational materials from the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan, nationwide organization advocating informed citizen involvement. Attend candidate and issues forums and educate yourself on the pros and cons.

Proposition 187, with the deceptive title of "Save Our State," is prejudicial. Legal migrants, political refugees and illegals are all lumped together with legitimate tourists and Asian American citizens, exploited and scapegoated. It is based on economic fear, ethnic prejudice and politics — seeds of social unrest and eventual riots.

Vote no on Proposition 187.

The outcome will have impact far beyond our state.

Proposition 186 is the California Health Security Act, which will guarantee every Californian complete health coverage that can never be taken away. It calls for broad funding. It will significantly reduce administrative expenses via a single-payer plan and other efficiencies.

Endorsers include Asian American Health Forum, Asian Health Services, Asian Law Caucus, teachers' groups, labor unions, church groups, senior citizens, ethnic and women's organizations. Vote yes on Proposition 186.

Another California proposition that needs careful study is 188, which is about smoking and tobacco products. Passage of this would mean less restrictive laws. Vote no to keep the current laws. It is opposed by the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association and PTAs.

Congressmen Mineta and Matsui are favored to retain their seats, according to the October issue of California Journal. A promising candidate from Southern California is Mark Takano of Riverside. The California Journal considers this 43rd Congressional District race a "toss-up."

Another hopeful is Peter Mathews of Long Beach, an Asian Indian American, who is running in the 38th Congressional District. Both Mathews, a professor of government at

Cypress College, and Takano are educators. They have the potential to be future congressmen if not this time around.

Tom Umberg is Asian America's choice for California attorney general. Sacramento lawyer Curtis Namba recently held an Umberg fundraiser in his home.

Let us not forget that incumbent Dan Lungren led the fight against Japanese American redress in Congress and that Asian Americans successfully opposed his appointment as California state treasurer following Jess Unruh's death. He is not a friend of civil rights, the environment, labor, immigrants, the disabled or women's issues. Vote for Umberg for attorney general.

Globally, the "action" is shifting from the Mediterranean Sea-Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean area. Minorities and especially Asian Americans are becoming majorities in many communities. Will we have adequate representation, a voice at the policy-making levels?

Voting is a right and a privilege. If getting to the polls would be difficult, try absentee voting. Cast your educated vote by mailing in the Application for Absent Ballot that came with the Sample Official Ballot and Voter Information Pamphlet by Nov. 1, 5 p.m.

*Iritani is northern secretary of the Asian Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus and public affairs chair of Florin JACL. He writes from Sacramento.*



## THE FUTURE OF JAACL

### I REDRESS FOLLOW UP

Redress will not be complete until every eligible person has been accounted for and compensated. The existing nation-wide organization and local chapter setup should be maintained and utilized to assist and monitor redress--assuming the federal government will administer the program. The Issei and other eligibles in small towns and rural areas may need help with the application process and to see that prompt and correct payment is made.

### II HUMAN RELATIONS ACTION

This could be the main area of action for all Nikkei and all other interested, concerned people. In every phase--business, education, housing, health care--anti-Asian feeling is increasing and hate crimes are on the rise. Whether we like it or not, what Japan does as nation and how other Asian Americans behave affects Japanese Americans and vice versa.

Recently, minority coalitions have confronted the presidents of Stanford, Michigan and Connecticut and demanded fair treatment and reduction of campus racism. Individually and collectively, we need to be more involved in coalition building and cooperative action for better human relations. Heretofore, too many of these organizations and activities have been "all talk" and "just words on paper" as they go through the motions and resulting in very little progressive action or even perceptible improvement. We need to go beyond going through the motions and to more tolerance and to a higher level of sensitivity and mutual understanding and of working together.

### III MEANINGFUL RETIREMENT

The two main aspects of our older years and retirement are health maintenance and meaningful activity. Some retirees are beginning to eat less meat, pastry, shoyu; watching their cholesterol and doing some planned exercise daily. Heretofore, many of us have worked hard, raising our families emphasizing education with little thought to hobbies or community involvement.. How often do we hear: he goes fishing all the time or golfing 3-4 times a week? Some Issei could use help due to language, skill and cultural limitations and especially if there are no caring, family support in their lives. Financing long term retirement nursing in the home or institutions and achieving daily living above mere existence are concerns for many of us.

### IV FUNDING

As in the economic world, the bottom line is funds and of dues, endowments and membership. There seems to be declining percentage of Japanese Americans among all Asian Americans. Possibly a name change and broader membership base may be in order. We could change to Asian or Pacific American Citizens League and actively encourage participation of non-Japanese Americans.

Frank Iritani, Bakersfield CA  
May 31, 1988



## RESUME

NAME: Frank Iritani

BIRTH: January 25, 1921; Denver, Colorado

PARENTS: Immigrants from Okayama Prefecture, Japan  
Father - Saichi, 1885-1955; Mother - Chitose (1896-1989)  
worked on railroad, farmed around Denver, raised five children

RESIDENCE: Previously: Bakersfield, California - 1964-1992  
Current: 890 Sunwind Way, Sacramento, California 95831

EDUCATION: Tokyo, Japan - Nichibei Gakuin, 1938-39.  
University of Minnesota, BA, 1949  
Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, CA; BD, 1955

FAMILY: wife - Joanne Ono, UC Berkeley and CSU Bakersfield, retired school teacher, Bakersfield City Schools; Interned in Poston, Arizona Relocation Center during WW II  
Daughter - Susanna (38), CSU Chico, CSU Northridge  
Washington, DC  
Son - Ken (36), UC Davis; Program Manager, Texas Instruments  
Sacramento, CA  
Daughter - Bonita, UC Santa Cruz, Stanford  
Philadelphia, PA

MILITARY SERVICE: Classified 1-A in 1942, Draft Board later arbitrarily reclassified me as 4-C; Volunteered 1944-46; US Army Military Intelligence Service, Ft. Snelling, MN and Tokyo

WORK: Christian Minister of several Japanese American Methodist Churches on West Coast, 1951-61. Social Service Worker, San Joaquin and Kern Counties. 1962-86, retired at 65.

ORGANIZATIONS: when living in Bakersfield  
St. Andrews UM Church member, Annual Conference delegate  
Japanese American Citizens League, High Desert Chapter, Lancaster, CA  
Kern County Democratic Central Committee member; state delegate  
Kern Commission on Aging, community member  
Boy Scouts of America - committee member and Scout master when son Ken was member, 1970-75  
Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles - Charter member and sustaining member  
National Federation of Asian American United Methodists, San Francisco  
Kern County Human Relations Commission - a founding member, 1990-92



## RESUME - continued

Kern Asian Pacific American (KAPA) Newsletter - monthly, founder & editor,  
1989-92

Bakersfield-Wakayama City Sister Project

Asian American Pacific Culture Festival committee member

ORGANIZATIONS - in Sacramento; (moved from Bakersfield, December, 1992)

Habitat for Humanity, Sacramento Chapter, Centennial UM Church  
representative

Florin JACL - transferred 1000 Club membership from High Desert, 1992

Pacific Rim Street Fest, Board member

Public Health Advisory Committee, Sacramento County, community member

Asian Pacific Democratic Caucus

VFW Nisei Post #8985, life member

Center for Pacific Asian Studies, CSUS, community member

CSUS Library Archives Japanese American Collections committee

Council of Asian and Pacific Islanders Together for Active Leadership,  
(CAPITAL) member

READINGS: The Sacramento Bee - local daily newspaper

Rafu Shimpo, Los Angeles Japanese American daily

Northwest Asian Weekly, Seattle weekly

Hokubei Mainichi - San Francisco daily

Economist Magazine - world news weekly

U. S. News & World Report - general weekly

Asian Week - San Francisco Asian American weekly

Pacific Citizen - JACL bimonthly news

TRAVELS: Japan, Korea and China - general study & travel, while living in Nichiei  
Gakuin, Tokyo, 1938-39

United States - cross country trip (Calif. to Boston) by van with family, 1977

China - Kunming, Xian, Chengdu & Beijing, conferences & travel, June, 1988

Bangkok - East West Center Conference, July 17-20, 1991

Canada - Victoria to Edmonton by RV, 2 weeks, May, 1990

United States - visited all ten WW II Japanese American Relocation Centers,  
1989-92 which resulted in book: TEN VISITS

Okayama, Japan - Parent's birthplace. Also Osaka, Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima,  
Nagasaki, Nagoya, Fukushima

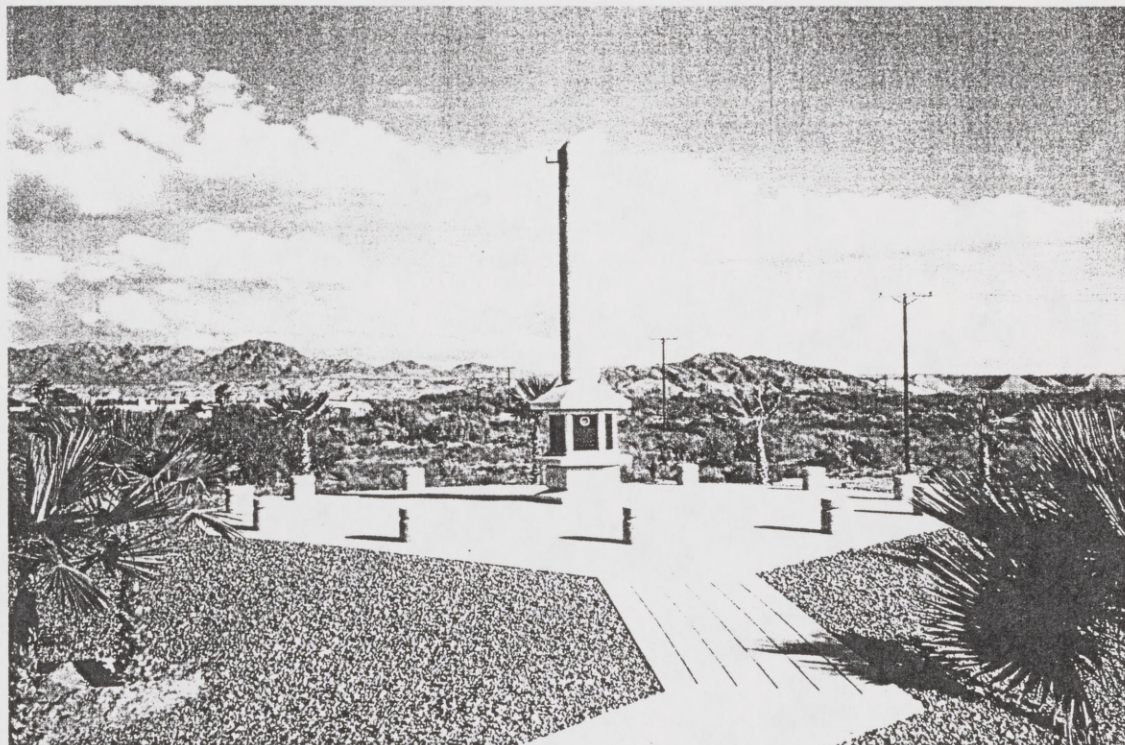
Hawaii - Honolulu and Hilo, to visit relatives

Sacramento, CA  
August 22, 1996



# TEN VISITS

Accounts of visits to all the Japanese  
American Relocation Centers



Frank and Joanne Iritani





Established 1929

# Pacific Citizen

National Publication of the Japanese American Citizens League

#2750/Vol 118, No. 14 ISSN: 0030-8579

2 Coral Circle, Suite 204, Monterey Park, CA 91755 April 15-21, 1994

## Easy-to-follow maps

■ Frank and Joanne Iritani. *Ten Visits*, F. Iritani, P.O. Box 221090, Sacramento, CA, 95822. (Jan., 1994, 68pp, color photos, maps, reading list, 8x11", \$15.95/\$18.24 for CA residents, tax and postage included.)

The Iritanis, Frank and Joanne (active Florin JACLers), had prepared their booklet after treks in 1989 to the 10 WWII Japanese American concentration camp sites with directions in time for the 50th anniversary of EO 9066 in 1992.

In the intervening months, they embellished the original edition with easy-to-follow maps and colored photos of the various camp-site dedications: i.e., Manzanar and Amache pilgrimages, Heart Mountain, Topaz and Delta monuments, Rohwer Cemetery's three monuments, Tule Lake, the Minidoka dedication during Idaho's Centennial year in '90; and the Poston memorial dedication of '92 with a one-year later picture for its front cover.

Thanks to George Kihara of Davis, the Iritanis received road directions to Gila River's second camp. Only Jerome is missing picture-wise. The stories of the U.S. and Canadian redress campaigns are appended.

The maps alone are worth the price of the book. It's also a handy introduction to the Japanese American experience from the Evacuation angle to the post-WWII generations and their children. (Also available at JACP, 234 Main St., San Mateo, CA, 98401, and JANM, 369 E. 1st St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.)

By HARRY K. HONDA

## A GUIDE TO INTERNMENT CAMPS

### TEN VISITS

BY  
FRANK &  
JOANNE  
IRITANI

Brief  
accounts  
of their  
visits to all  
10 WWII  
camps, 68  
pages, revised,  
January, 1994

Directions to each camp, sketch maps, color photos. Personal experiences of Poston Internee Joanne and Non-Internee Frank, essays on redress, draft resistance and human relations. Attractive color photo of Poston Monument on cover.

Write to: Frank Iritani, P.O. Box 221090,  
Sacramento, CA, 95822. \$15.95 per copy.  
Calif. tax. \$1.24, postage, \$1.05—total \$18.24

On sale at the Japanese American Curriculum Project, Inc., 234 Main St., San Mateo, CA, 94401, and the Japanese American National Museum, 369 E. First St., Los Angeles, CA, 90012.



*Bakersfield Californian 3-26-78*  
**Rafer Johnson teacher  
gets foundation medal**

Joanne Iritani has been awarded the Freedoms Foundation Teacher's Honor Medal for her work with mentally retarded students at Rafer Johnson School.

The non-political patriotic organization annually recognizes teachers displaying exceptional efforts to teach patriotism, responsible citizenship and better understanding of America.

Mrs. Iritani has been teaching in Bakersfield City School District for 13 years, and she has been at Rafer Johnson School since 1966. Her parents were natives of Japan, and her mother was one of the last Japanese immigrants allowed in the United States before the Exclusion Act of 1924.

Ironically, the freedom award winner and her family spent the duration of World War II in a camp for Japanese-Americans in Arizona.

At Rafer Johnson School, Mrs. Iritani coordinates programs that involve students in music and art. She directed the school's Bicentennial program as well as other special events.

In the music program at the school, older children are taught to play flutophones and recorders with such proficiency parents are often pleasantly surprised, a school spokesman said.

"Many people are surprised when they hear the children play, because they didn't ever imagine the mentally retarded

would ever be able to play musical instruments," said Mrs. Iritani.

Mrs. Iritani is the recipient of a host of awards for her service to education and the community, including the Stine School Library Award, Rafer Johnson PTA honorary service award, and the Bakersfield Council of Churches Layman of the Year Award.

The respected educator graduated from Bakersfield College and earned a B.A. from UC Berkeley. She lives in Bakersfield with her husband Frank; son Ken, senior class president at West High School; daughters Suzanna, 19, who attends BC, and Bonita, 16, a West High student.

—PACIFIC CITIZEN / Friday, April 14, 1978—

## Honors Medal awarded Nisei teaching mentally retarded

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. — Joanne Iritani was recently awarded the Freedoms Foundation Teacher's Honor Medal for her work with trainable mentally retarded students at Rafer Johnson School here.

The foundation annually recognizes teachers displaying exceptional efforts to teach patriotism, responsible citizenship and a better understanding of America.

Iritani, on staff at Rafer Johnson since 1966, coordinates programs involving students in music and art. She directed the school's Bicentennial Program as well as other special events.

In her music program, older children are taught to play flutophones and record-

ers with a proficiency that often surprises parents. "Many people are surprised when they hear the children



Joanne Iritani

play, because they didn't ever imagine that the mentally retarded would ever be able to play musical instruments," Iritani said.

This honor is the latest in a string of several awards, including the Stine School Library Award, Rafer Johnson PTA Honorary Service Award and the Bakersfield Council of Churches Layman of the Year Award.

Iritani received her AA from Bakersfield College and BA from the Univ. of California. She has been teaching in the Bakersfield

City School District for 13 years.

The teacher's parents were natives of Japan—her mother being one of the last Japanese immigrants allowed in the U.S. before the Exclusion Act of 1924. She and her husband, Frank, have three children. □